COUNTWAY LIBRARY
HC 4MNB 3

THE GLAND STEALERS

BERTRAM GAYTON

BOSTON
MEDICAL LIBRARY
8 THE FENWAY

Frank

from Mary

October 20,
1822

ALL'S BOOK SHOP
361 BOYLSTON ST.
BOSTON, MASS.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/glandstealers0000bert

THE GLAND STEALERS

WHAT THIS STORY IS ABOUT

Gran'pa is ninety-five, possessed of £100,000, a fertile imagination, and a good physique. He sees in the papers accounts of the theory of rejuvenation by means of gland-grafting.

Nothing will satisfy him but that the experiment should be made upon himself. He acquires a gorilla, a hefty murderous brute, and the operation is performed with success. That is only the beginning.

He next determines to dig out an old love, and make her young, too; and Sally, a dear old lady of seventy, arrives upon the scene.

Inspired to philanthropy by the thrill of regained youth, Gran'pa decides to take a hundred or so old men to Africa, capture a like number of gorillas, and borrow their glands.

There are thrilling adventues with the gorillas, whilst the old gentlemen supply the comedy—there are not enough glands to go round. The result of the operations is a surprise to all, particularly to the old gentlemen themselves.

THE GLAND STEALERS

BY

BERTRAM GAYTON

PHILADELPHIA & LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
1922

COPYRIGHT, 1922, BY J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

1 S 339

PRINTED BY THE J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY
AT THE WASHINGTON SQUARE PRESS
PHILADELPHIA, U. S. A.

TO
MARGUERITA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Gran'pa Hears the News	9
II.	Gran'pa Buys a Monkey	24
III.	We Inspect Alfred	38
IV.	The Avenue has a Surprise	53
V.	The Dug-out in the Garden	72
VI.	Gran'pa Reforms	86
VII.	Mr. Stringer Comes to Breakfast	98
VIII.	We Set Out for Bristol	114
IX.	Gran'pa Digs up an Old Romance	132
X.	The Massing of the Ancients	151
XI.	The Gorilla Country	169
XII.	In the Jungle	189
XIII.	The Gorilla at Home	217
XIV.	The Capture of Little Willie	237
XV.	A Gorilla Breaks Loose	254
XVI.	The Ancients Cast Lots	274
XVII.	Sally Slips Back	294

THE GLAND STEALERS

CHAPTER I

GRAN'PA HEARS THE NEWS

I HAVE never been able to understand why my great grandfather—an American, born and bred—left the States at the decrepit age of ninety-four and came to live with me in England.

His own explanation was that the decision arose from a natural desire to end his days with his only living relation—even if such an action entailed residing at the North Pole!

Although he did not anticipate an early demise, he apparently wished to be prepared, and to know that when the important event did occur he would be gathered to his fathers straight from the bosom of his family—or, at least, what was left of it since the death of his son in New York.

I was flattered; but not convinced. I knew that he was extremely proud of his country and had never forgiven my parents for their indiscretion in allowing me to be born in London, thereby presenting an extra citizen to England without any effort on her part.

More unforgivable still, neither my parents nor I had ever returned to America.

In spite of the suddenness of grandpa's arrival and the extremity of his age, for over a year we lived amicably together. Except for a tendency to be deaf and wilful at times, he gave little trouble. He ate very little, he said very little, and he listened only when

shouted at. In fact, it would be no exaggeration to describe my home—at that time—as a true haven of rest.

Picture it! There was Gran'pa, aged ninety-five—a nodder by the fire, a mumbler of tedious trifles, a scoffer at the present, but a relic of the past; there was myself, aged thirty-two—a widower, a respectable salaried official, moderately lazy and living principally and peacefully for the day (because there was not much to look forward to in the morrow); there was Molly, my twelve-year-old offspring—a long-legged schoolgirl, who ought to have been born a boy (like most girls of this generation); and there was Nanny, aged anything over fifty—the white-haired, sweet-tempered, motherly old thing who had been one of the "supers" present at my initial entrance on the world's stage.

There we were, the four of us! We never quarrelled, or argued, or indulged in riotous living, or suffered want, or did anything particularly exciting. We went on from day to day and from night to night like most of the other 40,000 people in our suburb. Big things happened in New York, in London, in Paris, in Moscow, in Berlin—or in the wide heavens above and the sea beneath—and we read journalistic and exaggerated accounts of these events in the morning papers, with mild interest and occasional emotion. We were just one of the individual family vertebræ of that middle class backbone which has made England the nation that it is—a rather self-centred, fairly intelligent, and very inquisitive community.

Then came that innocent-looking newspaper announcement concerning the new theory of rejuvenation by means of glandular graftings. It ran as follows:—

OLD TO BE MADE YOUNG.
ELIXIR OF LIFE IN MONKEY GLANDS.

(*From Our Own Correspondent.*)

PARIS, Wednesday.

At the Surgery Congress to-day the amazing statement was made that human life may be prolonged far beyond the allotted span by means of grafting young healthy glands, which will either replace or repair those deteriorated through old age.

A scientist has already succeeded in grafting some interstitial glands (the secretions of which hold the source of vital forces) to old goats and rams, which soon recovered their youth and vigor.

He is of the opinion that his laboratory experiments can be introduced into the operating theatre, and considers that an interstitial gland of a monkey grafted on an old man will restore him his youth.

It is interesting to note that five years ago the thyroid glands taken from a monkey were grafted on to a boy of fourteen, who was an idiot. The result was absolutely successful, for two years later the boy became completely normal and in 1917 went into the Army. . . .

I read it—as did most of my 40,000 suburban fellow-citizens—with a detached and half-incredulous feeling of, "Tut! tut! Whatever will they be up to next?"

After a moment's consideration, I put the paper in my pocket, intending presently to burn it. Gran'pa was a doddering old man who was always adopting the "If-only-I-were-twenty-years-younger" pose. He had tried many nostrums and followed much advice, with varying success, and I thought that it would be inad-

visable for him to read of this latest and most nonsensical theory. It would only make him restless and fidgety. So it seemed best to burn the newspaper and keep the matter quiet.

I was reckoning without two things, however—modern journalism and modern children. The papers started booming the discovery, it caught Molly's eye, and Molly passed on a particularly lurid account of it to Gran'pa. Her method was simple and tactful. She cut the article out and dropped it in Gran'pa's bedroom.

The next morning, an open volume of *The Encyclopædia Britannica* lay on the breakfast table, and, looking through its pages in deep contemplation, was Gran'pa, so engrossed and so deaf that he was evidently unaware of my presence in the room.

I crept up behind him, peered over his shoulder, and caught sight of the word—" GLANDERS," and then—" GLANDS."

I was about to speak (or cough) when Molly entered. He shut the book with a snap, stood up, heaved a deep sigh, and cleared his throat.

" George," he said, " I found a newspaper cutting in my bedroom when I was dressing this morning. Whose is it? "

I hesitated. It was very deplorable to have to give one's only daughter away; but I saw no help for it.

" I'm afraid," I explained, in great, gusty shouts, " that Molly must have dropped it last night. She went into your bedroom for something and . . ." I paused for more breath.

" Whassat? " he asked, with a trumpet-shaped hand to his ear.

I again went over the explanation of this most unfortunate occurrence, and he grasped it hazily and

suspiciously, as a man whose eyes are seeking to fathom the interior of a darkened room.

"I don't know how it got there," he mumbled. "But—George—I'm *glad!*"

He looked at me searchingly, and for the first time I seemed to see him as he really was—a rather pathetic, bent old man, bowed with the weight of a great invisible something—a shadow—a menace! But even as he stood there, his body suddenly straightened itself and his eyes lit up with a strange brightness. It was as though a quick flutter of youth had run through his veins.

"You've read it?" he asked.

"Yes" I confessed.

"Do you think it—possible?"

It was obvious that great tact was required in framing an answer to such a question.

"I shouldn't like to say. It's possible, perhaps; but it seems extremely improbable. These doctors and scientists are always experimenting on the human body. And yet—are we any better than we were a thousand years ago?"

It was not clear whether he had caught the gist of my reply, and for a long time he remained silent and thoughtful.

"I've been readin' in *The Encyclopædia Britannica* about those—glands," he said, a little sheepishly. "It's a queer thing that I've never noticed them before. That newspaper article isn't as foolish as you think, George."

"You misunderstood me, sir. What I said was. . . ."

"You're too sceptical, my boy!"

It seemed strange to hear the old accusing the young of scepticism, but I let it pass.

"One reads of so many new ideas nowadays," I remarked, weakly.

"That's true. But there have been some big things done since I was a lad. I remember the first railway at home; the bicycle, the pneumatic tire, and then—the first motor car. Now there's the aeroplane. Flying! That's wonderful, George!"

"It is!"

"All this inoculation, too. . . . That's happened in my lifetime. You seldom see people scarred with smallpox, nowadays. When I was a youngster. . . ." He fell into reminiscences, those peculiar mental rakings over the buried past. "It seems only the other day that my father took me by stage-coach from New York to Boston. No subways, then—all that vast subterranean burrowing was unthought of. . . . The suggestion of such a thing would have been enough to send a man to the nearest lunatic asylum. . . . Chloroform, cocaine—all the paraphernalia of modern surgery and medicine. You can't realize the surgeon of my young days. He was merely a glorified butcher. . . . Had to be!"

As I listened, he related a gruesome account of some poor wretch, whose only hope of living was by the amputation of a leg. But at the last moment the man's courage failed and he burst the straps of the operating table, rushed from the room, up the stairs, and into an attic, where he locked himself in, screaming maledictions and threats at the astounded staff who were swarming in pursuit. This terror-stricken flight was surely horrible enough, but it was still more ghastly to hear of how the huge six-foot surgeon hurled himself at the door, burst it open and sprang on the frightened, shivering wretch. Fighting like a maniac, the

victim was eventually bound and carried downstairs—again to face the horrors of that life-saving operation in all its cold-blooded and brutal reality.

"Try and picture such a scene to-day, George," continued the old man. "How many people would face one-tenth of the ordeals of my young days? And yet how many bother to say as much as 'Thank you!' All the wonderful discoveries which have been made, even in my little lifetime, are taken for granted now. The electric light, the telegraph, the telephone, wireless. . . . I could mention a thousand other things."

He paused, and, in the breathing space which followed, I again saw him in a new light. He was no longer the poor, doddering old man, mumbling incoherent nothings and drowsing his life away by the fireside, but a fellow-creature whose brain was afire with vivid thoughts and memories—a living soul, even though it was caged in a dying and encumbering body. If only he could have shaken off the dulness of physical infirmity and regained possession of himself once more! It was a stupendous thought. . . .

"You think I'm talking like a foolish old man," he said, suddenly breaking into my reverie. "But if you'd seen only a quarter of what I have, you wouldn't doubt for a moment. . . ."

Once again that extraordinary suggestion of sceptical youth and credulous age! Had I been mistaken in the old man, and judged him only by his physical inertia, never guessing that many of those long silent days of his by the fireside or in the shaded garden were periods of intense mental activity?

Here was Gran'pa, talking as he had never done before—at any rate, never since I had known him. Here was I, suddenly realizing his immense potentiali-

ties at ninety-five—merely because he had dropped his customary reticence and loosened his tongue.

"Gran'pa," I said. "Don't you think you are taking this a little too seriously. . . . ?"

He glared at me from beneath his great, projecting eyebrows.

"*No!*" he croaked, excitedly. "Plenty of other discoveries have been far more marvellous, but I've ignored them at the time because they weren't of immediate importance. This is different. It's a . . . tremendous and magnificent hope—a sort of light in the darkness, George. . . . Some will be too apathetic or ignorant to notice; some too tired and lonely to care; and some so ill and battered that death is far more pleasant than life. But a few, like myself, will see it as one of the greatest miracles of modern science, and they will take advantage of it. . . ."

He ceased abruptly—as if his mind had driven the creaking mechanism of his body to the verge of a breakdown. A fit of coughing seized him, he clutched at the back of his arm-chair, and with a shuddering sigh he sank down into this throne of contemplation which had become so great a necessity to his existence.

For awhile I thought that he was really ill, and poor little wide-eyed Molly ran to me and hung on to my sleeve, feeling no doubt that she was responsible for this sudden and unexpected outburst which had at last ended in physical collapse.

"Get me the brandy, dear," I said, placing my hands under Gran'pa's arms and raising him from his huddled position of insecurity.

As Molly crossed over to the sideboard he tried to rise, only to drop back again, exhausted and breathless. His face was deadly white, his hands shook, and

his jaws fell apart as if the last vestige of his strength had gone.

I took the bottle from Molly, hurriedly tipped some of its contents into the nearest cup, and tilted back Gran'pa's head, literally using his throat as a funnel into which I poured the brandy.

A convulsive movement followed and I was fearful that he might expire. It was like one of those moments when the crank of some huge engine dramatically pauses, and one is uncertain whether the fly-wheel will stop or gradually begin to pick up speed again. To this day I believe that it was "touch and go" with his life, those few drops of brandy providing just that tiny fillip required to set the wheels of existence in motion again.

"Thank God!" I breathed, as his mouth closed and his eyelids fluttered.

Molly was behind me, making peculiar little whimpering noises, and, taking hold of my hand, she pressed it tightly against her hot cheek. I stooped down and kissed her—poor little, frightened girl!

"Run into the kitchen to Nanny," I whispered. "But—not a word!"

"No, Daddy. . . ."

She went out and, with a sudden start, Gran'pa sat up.

"What was I saying?" he asked, feebly.

The question sounded so ludicrous that I couldn't help laughing.

"Oh! You were—just chatting about old times."

"Was I?"

He smoothed his long white beard with a trembling, blue-veined hand and then ran his fingers through

his hair, brushing it back from his forehead, and looking extremely puzzled.

"There was something else though . . ." he said, searching in his confused and troubled mind. "Ah! I remember, now! Those glands!"

"For Heaven's sake," I shouted, "leave 'em alone until you've had breakfast. You've all the day before you."

"That's true, George!"

"Don't start getting excited again."

"Was I?"

"I should think you were indeed! Look at that brandy bottle."

He did as he was told, but was evidently still mystified as to exactly what had happened.

"Have I—been drinking?" he asked, with a chuckle.

"No! I had to *pour* the stuff down your throat."

"But why?"

"Because—my dear old great-grandfather—you nearly fainted."

"You don't say so! Good job it didn't happen in the States. I might have died!"

He treated the matter so flippantly that I found it difficult to keep my temper.

"It's not advisable to start the day with so much excitement," I pointed out. "It's bad for the appetite—especially yours."

"Never felt better in my life, George!"

("That's the brandy!" I thought.)

He stood up, a little shakily perhaps, but certainly with no indication that he had stumbled so near to Death's door.

"I must take it quietly to-day," he said, realizing his weakness now that he was on his feet again.

I encouraged him in this idea, hoping that by the following morning he would have forgotten the whole affair, and when I left to catch my train there seemed to be every likelihood of this fervent desire being fulfilled. To-morrow, he would be nodding by the fireside as of old, and glands and monkeys and professors would all be part of a very hazy and negligible past.

It was a consoling thought, but, unfortunately, events shaped themselves quite differently.

When I arrived home about six o'clock the following evening there was an air of consternation in the home. Nanny and Molly both met me at the door with long, solemn faces.

"Hullo!" I exclaimed. "What's the matter with you two?"

The first to answer was the dear old soul who had taken the place of both nurse and mother to Molly for practically the whole of the child's life.

"Have you seen anything of Mr. Hadley?" she asked.

"No!"

"He went out just after lunch to get some tobacco and hasn't come back yet."

"That's strange. He's not usually out so long as that, is he?"

"He's never been away more than about an hour at a time before."

"Didn't he *say* anything, Nanny?"

"Only that he wanted some more tobacco."

I went into the dining-room, intending to glance through the evening post before proceeding further, and, as I picked up the first letter, my eye suddenly

fell on the old man's pouch lying on the mantelpiece. I stepped over to it and pinched it.

"This is very peculiar!" I said. "Here is his pouch—simply bursting with 'baccy.'"

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Nanny.

"I must go out and see if I can find him. If not, we must communicate with the police at once."

"Can I come with you, Daddy?" cried Molly.

"If you're quick."

She raced upstairs and I could hear the sound of hurried movements overhead.

"You'd better keep dinner back for half-an-hour or so, Nanny. I wish you'd 'phoned me."

"I expected him back every minute. It was such a nice day that I thought he might have gone up to your office."

"But he's never done such a thing before. What on earth made you think that, Nanny?"

"He was saying this morning that he'd like to go over there one of the first fine days."

More mysterious than ever!

At that moment Molly re-entered the room and—the bell rang!

Everyone knows that queer thrill which follows the sudden tinkle of a bell in the midst of a serious conversation about some friend or relative in trouble. The sound seemed to run through every vein in my body.

I hurried to the door and flung it open, expecting Heaven knows what after an old man of ninety-five had been away in the streets for over five hours.

"Yes?" I said, peering into the dark.

"I hope I haven't kept dinner waiting, George," came the answer.

It was Gran'pa!

"Where on earth have you been?" I yelled.

He came into the hall and I switched on the light.

"I went out for some tobacco and a little stroll. But it was such a lovely day that I thought I'd take a 'bus ride up to town." He fumbled in his overcoat pocket and beckoned to Molly, who was standing staring at him from the dining-room doorway. "Here's a present for you, Mollikins!"

She didn't need a second invitation to bestir herself.

"Oh! You darling old Gran'pa!" she cried, running up to him. "Whatever is it?"

She felt the paper wrapping with childish curiosity and interest, tore off the string and rapidly exposed the contents.

It was a little Chinese god in white ivory—as delicate a bit of work as any I had seen.

"Daddy!" she exclaimed. "Isn't it—*scrumptious!*"

"That's very nice of you, Gran'pa!" I bellowed. "Where did you find it?"

He hesitated.

"In a Regent Street shop," he said, at last, beginning to remove his hat and coat.

I regret to say that I did not believe him. That ugly little brute of an idol had either been discovered in a Chinese curio shop in the East End, or purchased from some sailor in the neighborhood of the Docks. It was so thoroughly typical of that quarter and so unusual a present to bring home from Regent Street, that I was convinced Gran'pa had lied in his beard.

More than that, his whole manner was mysterious and secretive. He had an air of wanting to get away

from us—or get us away from him—or, failing that, to get our thoughts away from his five-hour absence from home.

"I'll just pop upstairs and have a wash," he mumbled.

Washing for dinner—at ninety-five! Of course, he *had* done such things before. . . .

I looked at Nanny; and she looked at me.

"He's been up to something," I said. "I don't like it a bit."

"Oh, well," she remarked, in her practical way. "He's home safe and sound again. We must be grateful for that!"

"Possibly! Still, I hope he isn't going to make a habit of these afternoon jaunts."

I escorted Molly and her little heathen god into the dining-room, where we awaited the arrival of Gran'pa and dinner.

When he came downstairs again he looked very flushed and excited, and, for some inexplicable reason, I couldn't help associating his appearance with that terrible morning when he had first read about the glandular rejuvenation of the human race. Had his absence anything to do with this? Where had he really been? And, why?

Although I questioned him with great tact he was obstinately uncommunicative—even stone-deaf at times!

"A little 'bus ride in town, George," he murmured, over the soup, "is a great appetizer, you know."

I do believe the wicked old sinner was actually laughing up his sleeve at me.

"Any other purchases besides the idol, Gran'pa?" I shouted.

His eyes twinkled and he wiped his moustache on his napkin and leaned back contentedly.

"Perhaps it would be as well. . . ."

Then he appeared to think better of what he was going to say and added:

"I did make another little purchase from a sailor I met, but it won't be along until to-morrow."

"Then you *have* been into the East End?" I cried, jubilantly.

"Who said I had?"

"Nobody! But I guessed it!"

At that, he suddenly became quiet and extremely deaf. Evidently, he had gone further than he had intended, and for the rest of the evening he maintained an air of contemplative silence, broken once or twice by mumbled protests that he was very tired.

So it came about that both Molly and I had to wait until the next day before our curiosity was satisfied.

Returning home about six o'clock as usual, I let myself in and began leisurely removing my coat. I had just hung it up on the hall stand when the kitchen door opened and Nanny emerged in a great hurry. She was followed by a scuffling noise, a squeak, and then a loud crash of breaking crockery. It sounded just as if she had suddenly let out the fury of some miniature tornado which was hustling round a china shop.

"Good Lord!" I gasped. "What is it?"

"Oh!" she said. "It's—that nasty little monkey which came this afternoon. *Oh—h!*"

As she rushed past me I saw a small, active brown body leap on to the dresser, seize a chunk of bread in its paws and then drop to the floor again, with Gran'pa and Molly in wild pursuit.

CHAPTER II

GRAN'PA BUYS A MONKEY

AS Nanny shot past me into the dining-room and slammed the door behind her, I strode forward into the kitchen. There followed a scene I shall never forget.

Molly was standing on a chair, shouting and laughing. Gran'pa was on his hands and knees, fishing about under the table and making peculiar little coaxing noises; and in the centre of the room was the cat, with arched back and erect and angry-looking tail.

"*Gran'pa!*" I shouted—at the top of my voice.

He withdrew his head from beneath the tablecloth, his long, picturesque white beard trailing grotesquely on the polished linoleum, and his whole attitude and appearance as near to the monkey kingdom as ever I had seen them.

"What in Heaven's name do you think you are doing?" I bellowed.

Before he could answer, there was a scuttling sound under the table; the cat vanished, and the monkey suddenly dashed out of cover, made straight for me and flung its arms round my right leg.

"Get away, you brute!" I yelled, trying to shake it off.

"Oh, Daddy, darling!" cried Molly, "isn't he sweet?"

"*Sweet!*" I thought, wildly. "This is a nice home-coming for a man after a hard day's work in town."

Stooping down, I tried to dislodge the little brute's grip on my trouser-leg, but the effort ended in failure. It had evidently found what it thought was a refuge from further pursuit—and there it meant to stay!

"Come and get him off!" I shouted at Gran'pa.

The old man crawled quickly towards me, took hold of the monkey's tail and pulled!

It was then that I indulged in my first laugh that evening. There was a quick snarl from the monkey, a shout from Gran'pa, and the next moment Molly and I were witnessing the thrilling spectacle of a tug-of-war in which gran'pa's beard and the monkey's tail were the chief objects of interest.

"*Leggo!*" cried the old man. "Ah! You would—would you?"

I saw the gleam of white teeth as the monkey tried more drastic methods on Gran'pa's arm, the sudden flash of a human hand as it reached out and cuffed the animal's head, and then a sort of rough-and-tumble on the linoleum.

For about twenty seconds it was difficult to discern which was man and which was monkey. Then the antagonists separated. There was a whoop and a snarl, and a moment later the monkey was gazing down at us from the top shelf of the kitchen dresser.

One would have thought that Gran'pa might have taken advantage of this little respite; but, no! Either he was intensely vindictive, or else he was fearful of his antagonist escaping.

"Lend me that chair, Molly!" he shouted.

He shuffled over to it, took it in his hands and approached the dresser.

"You'll get bitten!" I warned him.

("And serve you Jolly well right!" I added, under my breath.)

Undeterred, however, he placed the chair carefully in position and prepared to mount.

The monkey eyed him for a moment with an interest which quickly merged into intelligent anticipation. Scrambling further away from its pursuer, it paused, looked over its shoulder and then suddenly reached down to the next shelf and seized a plate.

"*Whoa!*" I shouted.

CRASH!

Another and another plate descended in rapid, nerve-shattering succession.

"I say!" I cried. "This is getting beyond a joke. There won't be a piece of whole china left in the place if we aren't quick. . . . Molly! Go and fetch me that empty potato sack out of the pantry."

She rushed out of the room and Gran'pa and the monkey remained very still, watching each other with malicious intent.

"For goodness sake don't move," I pleaded, "or the brute will only begin again."

Gran'pa controlled himself and presently Molly returned with the sack.

But even now it was not as easy as it looked. Here was the sack, and there was the monkey. How to get the latter into the former was a feat requiring the magic art of conjuring.

I tried honeyed expressions, and even offered a succession of such things as bread, cake, a banana, a handful of walnuts, and an apple. But the monkey didn't show even the mildest interest. It was a most suspicious little beast!

"You and Molly must hold the sack out," I said to Gran'pa. "Like this—with the mouth wide open! Now I'll scrape him into it."

The old man and Molly caught hold of opposite sides of the sack and gently tiptoed their way to the dresser, whilst I picked up the coal shovel and mounted the chair.

"Now," I whispered. "Get right underneath him. . . . Ready?"

I recalled that verse of the Psalms: "*Thou shalt smite him in his hinder parts and put him to shame.*"

Raising the long-handled shovel, I slid it quickly along the back of the top shelf and gave a powerful forward thrust as it reached the monkey.

There was a little squeak of pained surprise, a clatter of falling plates and metal, the thud of a soft body on the floor—not in the sack!—and then a brown streak crossed the linoleum in a diagonal line from dresser to door.

"Quick!" I cried. "He'll be out!"

The spirit of the chase was now burning in me like a flame. I dashed across the kitchen in wild pursuit. But it was too late.

A metallic clatter came from the pantry, another squeak, and the little brute vanished through the open window in a whirl of scurrying arms and legs.

I turned to Molly, as she hurriedly entered, and explained, simply:

"That is through not shutting the door after you."

"Has he gone, Daddy? Oh! What a shame! . . ."

She was on the verge of tears and evidently regarded the monkey's escape principally as the loss of a possible pet for herself.

We went outside into the gathering dusk.

"It's hopeless trying to catch him now," I observed. "He's probably grinning down at us from the top of the walnut tree—thinking what fools we are."

We stared up at the dark tangle of leaves and branches and presently Gran'pa joined us, looking very flushed and gloomy.

"I expect he's up there!" I shouted, pointing heavenwards.

He made no reply, his emotions no doubt being far too deep for words.

"Look!" cried Molly. "I can see something moving."

I gazed aloft and at last made out a shadow-like form hauling itself leisurely upwards—and upwards. . . . It was so exasperating that for one mad moment I even thought of climbing in pursuit.

"Come along!" I said, at last. "Nothing but a shot gun will ever fetch him down again. He has enough nuts up there for a lifetime."

Gran'pa looked at me miserably.

"*Confounded nuisance!*" he mumbled. "That monkey cost me five pounds, George. . . ."

"*Did* it, now?"

"Yes!"

"Whatever made you get the beastly thing?"

The reason was obvious, but I felt angry at all this disturbance being suddenly thrust into my orderly and peaceful life, and took a cruel delight in seeing the old man's discomfort.

"You *know* why I got it," he snapped.

"You were after its interstitial glands," I retaliated. "I don't think it's right and proper."

He drew himself up, defiantly.

"May I ask why?" he inquired with elaborate calm.

"Well, it seems inhuman to go about cutting up monkeys and things to get hold of their glands. I hope to goodness the neighbors don't get to hear of it."

He glanced at me.

"George," he said, quietly. "Since I've been living with you we've never started quarrelling, and I don't intend to; but I mean to go on with this. I'm an old man and I'm determined to test that new theory. It is in my own interests and in the interests of science. If you object, say so—and I'll leave the house this very night."

"You aren't serious, Gran'pa. . . . ?"

"I mean every word."

"Then there's no more to be said. Naturally, though, I don't like disturbances of this sort. It's not pleasant to come home and find one's housekeeper in hysterics, Molly half off her head with excitement, yourself capering about like a lad of ten, the cat rampant and distracted, the kitchen turned into a menagerie, and pieces of my best china flying about like shells in a bombardment."

"You needn't worry about the last. I can easily replace the crockery—if that's your main grievance."

"Not at all! But you must admit. . . ."

"I'll admit anything *and* apologize for it, if necessary. But I won't be dictated to."

"I'm sorry, Gran'pa. . . ."

"That's all right, my boy. Only, don't let us squabble about this most unfortunate mishap."

He gazed wistfully at the dark branches of the walnut tree, where his hope of rejuvenation was perched in security and ease.

"Let us go indoors," he said, at last. "It is useless waiting here any longer!"

We reentered the house.

"Nanny!" I called out.

The dining-room door opened.

"Come along!" I said. "All clear!"

She returned to the kitchen, looking very scared and dubious.

"Where—is it?"

"Up in the walnut-tree."

"Thank goodness!"

Gran'pa winced at her selfish way of viewing his misfortune.

"I don't think the brute will worry you again," I whispered. "It'll probably be miles away by to-morrow morning. But you'd better keep the windows shut to-night. They're such inquisitive little beasts."

Molly and I withdrew to the dining-room, Gran'pa shuffling and mumbling after us.

He was clearly upset at the sudden failure of his plans, and I could not help sympathizing with him. That previous day's search in the East End for a gentleman with a monkey for sale must have been a strenuous enough undertaking at his age, but the skylarking in the kitchen must have been a still greater strain. Nothing but Gran'pa's intense enthusiasm for the cause could possibly have supplied such tremendous motive power to a man of ninety-five. His endurance, his persistence, and his unswerving faith and optimism had been extraordinary from the very moment he had read that article. For the first time since his arrival in England, he seemed to have waked up. It was, indeed, more than a little sad to think that such industry had ended in failure.

"D'you intend offering a reward for the monkey's recovery?" I asked.

"Certainly!"

"Isn't it unwise? You'll only have people talking."

"What about? There's no reason why a man can't keep a monkey if he wants to. Nothing very startling in that."

"Perhaps not. But you must know that this theory of the interstitial glands is in all the papers. Everyone is talking about it. They'd immediately associate your extreme age with. . . ."

"George!" he interrupted.

"Yes?"

"Are you trying to be funny at my expense?"

"Of course I'm not, Gran'pa. I'm merely pointing out the ordinary, everyday view which people will take. You're so carried away by your enthusiasm that I think you don't realize some of the dangers incurred."

"Danger? What danger?"

"Over-excitement is one of them. Public ridicule another."

He snapped his fingers.

"*That*—to both of 'em."

"Suppose the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals steps in?" I suggested.

"Society of Fiddlesticks. My life is worth more than a wretched little monkey's."

"I quite agree. But will everyone hold the same opinion if you go through with this—butchery of defenceless apes?"

I thought that I had found a weak spot in his armor at last; but I was mistaken. These last few days had wrought a miraculous change in him. Physically, he was much the same; but, mentally, he

seemed to be an entirely different man. To put the matter crudely but vividly, his mind now had "ginger" in it. It was alive, active, rebellious, uncannily penetrating.

"George!" he said. "I want a quiet talk with you. It's about time, too! I seem to have been sitting in that chair for years without making a murmur. And you've thought my brains were dead. It must be this confounded climate of yours. But I'll show you."

He suddenly stopped and looked at Molly.

"I'm going to have a word with your father," he said. "Run in to Nanny for a few minutes, my dear."

As she left the room I had the feeling that something ominous was going to happen. I filled my pipe, lit it, sat down on the edge of the table and waited.

He did not speak for a few moments, but stood pulling pensively at his long, bushy beard—stroking and smoothing it as if it was the seat of all his wild unrest. It looked so quaint to see this poor, bent old grandfather of mine preparing to bully me, that I could hardly refrain from smiling. And yet there was something in his manner which demanded respect and attention.

"It's difficult to speak one's mind, George, after all the kindness you've shown me since I've been in England," he began, half-apologetically.

There was another long and contemplative pause, more tugging at his beard—and more curiosity on my part. But presently he broke free of his fetters and went straight ahead.

"Have you ever wished I were dead?" he asked, abruptly. "Don't be afraid to answer!"

"In moments of anger or weakness," I began tentatively, "I may—once or twice. . . ."

"Ah! That's nothing!"

It was very broad-minded of him to make such an admission, but I still couldn't see what he was driving at.

"What I mean is this, George," he went on. "Have you ever wished me dead because of my money?"

I started, hesitated a second, and then said:

"*No!*"

"You've never thought how much better off you'll be when I'm dead and gone? Never wished I'd—get a move on?"

"Naturally, I've realized that you'd leave most of your money to me, but I've never. . . ."

"Then you must be different from everyone else. The young are always waiting for the old to die and leave them something."

"That is rather sweeping!"

"Nonsense! Don't be a hypocrite. I had just the same inclination when I was young—at any rate about distant relatives—like yourself and me, for instance."

"That is no reason why you should accuse me of such sentiments," I cried, rather testily.

"It is only telling you that you're human."

I refused to argue the matter.

"Well?" I said. "What's the object of all this palaver?"

"That's what I'm coming to. We can take it for granted that even if you're not anxious for me to . . . pack up, you won't be very sorry when I *have* gone."

Again I started to protest, but he stopped me.

"Mind, I'm not such a fool as to blame you, for

I do realize these things. So I intend altering them. I'm going to turn your inclination the other way. Not only will you *want* me to live, but it's going to be made positively worth your while."

This sounded very exciting—but I thought it just as well not to say so. I held my peace.

"My plan is quite simple," he resumed. "I intend going on with this experiment and having some new glands grafted, but I must have your help—your interest—your enthusiasm behind me. It is necessary at my age to depend on someone's youthful and active support. So the day when the operation is declared successful you will receive five thousand dollars in cash."

I gasped, but he went on with reckless extravagance:

"I'm a much wealthier man than you have ever imagined, George—and we'll both begin to take advantage of the fact at once. Twenty years ago, when I went to end my days in peace under your grandfather's hospitable roof, I was worth close on two hundred thousand dollars. That's a good deal . . . but, wait!"

I did so—speechless and open-mouthed.

"I intended leaving him everything when I died, but . . . the fates arranged otherwise. Then I came to live with you, when he was gone. And here I am—still spared—and with the money still growing. My expenditure was small; for, after all, there was little I wanted at my age beyond an easy chair by the fireside . . . food and comfort . . . and tobacco, of course. So it came about that nearly every penny of my dividends has been reinvested during the last twenty years, and to-day I'm worth . . . what do you think?"

I couldn't think. I was far too amazed at Gran'pa's sudden disclosure of the extent of his worldly wealth

after all the years of secrecy before he came to England.

"I shouldn't like to say," I stammered. "But it must be some nest egg!"

"Well over half a million dollars," he announced, quietly. "There! I've put all my cards on the table, at last, and I suggest five thousand dollars down for you, and then—ten thousand for each year I live. *But* . . . nothing when I die. How's that, George?"

He was actually laughing!

"It is—magnificent—staggering!" I exclaimed, trying to remember the present rate of exchange. "But it's silly to make such a proposition."

"Is it? We shall see!"

"You could rely on my help in any case."

"I believe you. In spite of it, however, I think you'll agree that our interests will be identical in future."

It would have been futile to dispute such a statement.

"I'm with you heart and soul in this gland business," I said. "I always was, but . . ."

"Now, George, admit that you're keener than you were."

"Willingly!" I laughed.

"Shake on it!"

We shook! Ninety-five and Thirty-two shook hands on one of the strangest and most thrilling bargains ever made. Some people might have called me mercenary, but, as Gran'pa had said, I was only human, and he really was a nuisance at times! This new arrangement was bound to make me take a keener interest in his welfare.

"Now," he said, "we won't count the first move in the game. That monkey's gone for good. It is your turn. . . . Come along, George!"

I considered the matter for several minutes before I spoke.

"Well," I suggested, at last, "we must first find an up-to-date surgeon who's willing to undertake the job. . . . Next, we must get another monkey—a bigger and better one than that scrubby little brute you bought yesterday. I'm in favor of a gorilla, or an ourang-outang, something with active and powerful internal organs. . . . Then we want a list of the glands you're most likely to require. I don't think an entire outfit would be advisable at first. One should go carefully in such matters—starting with, perhaps, two or three new glands. If they're a success you can extend the enterprise. . . . There's no reason, for instance, why you shouldn't go one better than Nature and have some of them in duplicate—a couple of pairs of each, say. I believe they're all in pairs; but we can go into that later. It's a big thing, and it will want a good deal of studying. . . ."

I found my enthusiasm growing.

"By Jove!" I cried. "This is going to be some experiment, Gran'pa! Think of it! You're ninety-five—packed with memories and experiences; crammed full of calm common-sense, a sort of perambulating encyclopædia of acquired knowledge—the most valuable form of wisdom in the world—but at present, you are hopelessly handicapped by physical disabilities. Your senses are deadened, your mind is stupefied, your . . ."

"Gently, George!"

But I couldn't help it. The possibilities underlying that rejuvenescence were so great that the mere contemplation of them carried me away.

"Remove all those degenerative influences, those bodily encumbrances," I went on, "and you have

MIND triumphant. Even as you are, you're a wonderful old man, but with youth on your side. . . ."

"You flatter me, George! But it certainly is going to be a BIG THING!"

I was going to say more, but at that moment Nanny entered with the first instalment of dinner.

"We'll begin to-morrow," I said.

Nanny stared at me in amazement, the tray trembling in her hands.

"I was speaking to Gran'pa," I explained.

She put the tray down and looked at both of us a little doubtfully.

"If this thing's a success," I thought, "perhaps Nanny would like a new outfit, too. I should be sorry to lose her some day, and here's a very simple solution of the difficulty. I'll speak to her about it later. . . ."

We sat down to dinner and, presently, I drank to the success of Gran'pa's great venture into the Unknown, to that prospective fight of his against the muffling embrace of Old Age.

"May you regain your youth," I said, simply. "And your right hand recover its strength and cunning. Here's to you, sir!"

Molly kicked me under the table and, when Gran'pa bent over his soup a moment later, she made frenzied, interrogatory signs to me, with her eyebrows lifted. I pretended not to understand.

"Daddy," she whispered, "is he going to have some of those inter-stitches put in?"

I nodded.

"Oo-oo! Isn't it exciting!"

It certainly was! And Heaven alone knew where it would end.. . .

CHAPTER III

WE INSPECT ALFRED

IT turned out later that Gran'pa had already approached half-a-dozen medical men on the question of the operation, but they had all refused to undertake such a case.

So the next day I had the following advertisement inserted in the Agony Column of the *Times*:—

> IN THE INTERESTS OF SCIENCE.—Old gentleman of ninety-five, with A1 brains but B1 physique, desires to get into touch with a reliable and enterprising surgeon, who believes in the new theory of rejuvenation, with a view to immediate Glandular Graftings.

I must admit that the wording was reminiscent of the typical matrimonial appeal, but as the advertiser's identity was concealed from the British public by means of a box number, it seemed to matter very little what method was employed so long as the result was a success.

I am thankful to say that it was. In spite of my fears that professional etiquette might stand in the way, I received over twenty replies from medical men living in various parts of the country. All of them were willing, and even anxious, to perform the operation, but apparently not one was in possession of the necessary glands. This was an annoying detail, but such setbacks appear to be inevitable in the initial stages of all great enterprises. The day may come

when interstitial glands will form part of the medical, or rather, physiological equipment of every practitioner in the land, but meanwhile we had to hustle for ourselves.

So I advertised for a monkey as well.

"Gorilla, chimpanzee or ourang-outang wanted at once," I scribbled on a scrap of notepaper.

Then I judiciously added:—

> "For travelling showman. Must be healthy and virile. State price and how long the animal has been resident in England."

A couple of days later half-a-dozen replies were received and Gran'pa and I spent the evening in sorting out the most suitable doctor and ape, preparatory to bringing them together in this novel "triangle" of surgeon, man and monkey.

"You've done very well, George, so far," said Gran'pa. "That was a bright idea of mine to offer you. . . ."

"I've told you before, sir, that I should have helped in any case."

"Have it your own way, my boy. So long as I'm satisfied, what's it matter?"

"Not a cent. But I won't have you thinking that greed is my only motive. I'm keenly interested in the experiment for quite different reasons. Firstly, you're a relative of mine, and I want to see you happy and contented. Secondly, I feel like one of the pioneers or patrons of modern science."

"You'll have the biggest chance of your life as still another sort of pioneer, if this is a success.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Ah! It is just an idea, at present. But it'll set the world talking, if I decide to take it up."

"Do tell me, Gran'pa!"

"No! One thing at a time, my boy. Just concentrate on getting that five thousand dollars first, and. . . ."

"Will you leave that infernal bonus out of the question!" I cried.

"I apologize! Just concentrate on my rejuvenation, then! Oh, by the way, I want you to come round to my solicitor in the morning and sign the agreement I've drawn up."

"You've done nothing so absurd, I hope, as to put this idiotic bargain on paper."

"No! It's on parchment. I believe in everything being shipshape—in case of accidents. Now, don't start arguing, George!"

Gran'pa is the most obstinate old man I know; so I refrained from further discussion, and the following day repaired with him to his solicitors at Lincoln's Inn.

There, we signed a contract which must have been unique in the annals of legal literature. It ran thus:—

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT made this eighteenth day of October, One thousand nine hundred and twenty-one, BETWEEN GEORGE BARNETT and CHARLES HENRY HADLEY, both of Northcote, Airesdale Avenue, Richmond, in the County of Surrey.

WHEREBY IT IS AGREED as follows:—

1. George Barnett shall make himself reasonably conversant with the possibilities of rejuvenation by means of the grafting of interstitial glands; he shall do all that is in his power to hasten the

application of the process to the said Charles Henry Hadley, to make arrangements for the operation; and to provide suitable comforts and accommodation during the patient's convalescence.

2. Furthermore, George Barnett shall apply himself diligently to helping the said Charles Henry Hadley to maintain a state of healthy activity during the remaining years of the latter's life.

3. In consideration of which, Charles Henry Hadley shall pay to George Barnett the following sums of money:

(*a*) Five thousand dollars on the receipt of a medical certificate that the operation has been successful.

(*b*) Ten thousand dollars for each whole year during which the said Charles Henry Hadley shall remain alive, commencing to reckon as from this date, and payment being made within one month after the expiration of each year.

(*c*) On the death of Charles Henry Hadley, the said George Barnett or his heirs shall receive one-fiftieth part of the former's estate for each completed year of life.

AS WITNESS the hands of both contracting parties.

We signed the document, and I turned to Gran'pa.

"Er—that clause about one-fiftieth part of the estate." I said. "Does it mean that you expect to add another fifty years to your life?"

"It does!" he replied.

I whistled.

"Phew! I shall be a doddering old man myself by then."

"Nonsense! You'll avoid that by adopting my methods. Only you'll start earlier in life."

"Never! When my glands give out—I shall!"

"The same sort of argument used to be brought forward about vaccination—the 'Let-Nature-take-its-own-course' cry. . . . Even to-day there are anti-vaccination cranks."

"That's different. Vaccination is a safeguard against disease."

"Quite so. And this is a safeguard against something much worse than disease. It's an antidote to Death."

I could again feel the inclination to argue surging up in me, but I remembered my dignity and desisted.

"I wish you would tell me about this other 'pioneer' stunt of yours," I said, as we emerged into the sunlit courtyard.

"In the fulness of time"

"I'm terribly curious."

"You won't be able to contain yourself when you do know. It's been one of your dreams—and mine. Well! You look like having your chance at last, George. If only the new glands work," he added, in parenthesis.

There was a possibility, of course, that this other secret and alluring project of Gran'pa's was merely a bait to keep my enthusiasm alive. I suggested this to him, in the hope that he would relent and satisfy my curiosity.

"No, George! You must be patient. If you'd lived as long as I have you'd learn to take things

in logical order. First the glands, then—the glory!"

We had now reached the busy street again—a new world after the peaceful vicinity of those old offices—and Gran'pa bought an evening paper. He was always buying papers now!

Glancing hurriedly through the headings, he gave vent to a sudden exclamation.

"Ah!"

"What is it?" I asked, looking over his shoulder.

He retreated into a doorway, sheltered from the stream of hurrying pedestrians and there pointed to a heading:—

TEST CASE.

And underneath:—

EXPERIMENT ON AN AGED CONVICT.

I read the following details:—

"A *Herald* dispatch from San Francisco states that after a convict was hanged at San Quentin Penitentiary, yesterday, for the murder of his mother-in-law, the murderer's interstitial glands were cut out and transplanted in a sixty-year-old convict as an experiment for the purpose of verifying the recent theory of rejuvenation by this process. The doctors expect that new physical and mental strength will be thereby given to the aged convict."

"There you are!" cried Gran'pa. "That's the Americans all over. They've begun already." He looked at me wistfully. "I did hope that I might have had the honor of being the first."

"You'll be a good second, anyhow," I said encouragingly. "Cheer up!"

He was about to fold the paper and put it into his pocket, when we caught sight of the following:—

BOLT FROM THE BLUE.

"Considerable excitement was caused in Upper Richmond Road, Richmond, this morning by a monkey suddenly dropping from the overhanging branch of a tree into the lap of a lady seated on the top of a passing 'bus.

"Pursued by the other passengers, it scrambled down the rail at the rear and rushed across the street, where it tried to scale a garden wall. After a few minutes exciting chase, it was eventually captured by a constable, who, much to the amusement of the crowd, took it to the police station.

"Questioned by our correspondent, the authorities stated that, although no charge had been preferred against the animal for causing an obstruction, it had been placed temporarily under lock and key, and is now awaiting its owner."

"Well, I'm . . . er . . . poor little brute!" exclaimed Gran'pa.

"Are you going to claim it?" I asked.

He hesitated a moment, but, brief as his contemplation of the matter was, I think that he immediately realized the impossibility of an old man of ninety-five calling at a police station for a monkey—particularly at a time like the present. Naturally, his secret would be guessed at once.

"No!" he said, with quiet dignity. "I shan't want it in any case, now. They'll probably send it to the Dogs' Home at Battersea, or Scotland Yard—or the Zoo. Let them! . . . Er. . . . as I was going to say, George, about that sixty-year-old convict, the

Americans are a very go-ahead race. I should like *you* to pop over to the States some day. . . ."

Already, he was beginning to look into the rosy future!

"We *must* travel," he went on, pensively. "I'm getting bored. I've always wanted to see the world, but when I was younger I hadn't the money; and when I grew older I hadn't the necessary health and vitality. Life is full of anomalies like that, George."

"It is," I agreed, ruefully.

"But this business will do away with such difficulties. There's a big future before us."

I responded to that last word. It had a generous sound about it and awoke ambitions I had buried over a dozen years ago, when an unkind fate had allowed me to pass into the soul-destroying ranks of the Civil Service. Ugh! How I had vegetated since that ghastly day on which the list of "successful" candidates had been published! How the spirit of adventure had been slowly suffocated! How flabby-minded I had become! How mellow! But now at last there was a door opening. My red-tape-bound soul stirred in its prison and peered out at a strip of sunlit country where free men made of life a joyous adventure.

"You're a great man, Gran'pa," I said. "You make me feel quite old beside you."

He dug me good-humoredly in the ribs.

"There are times, George, when I have thought you were rather a stick-in-the-mud. But I've put it down to your job, and the fact that you are British."

"I wish my brains had fizzled out in the examination room and I'd run away to sea."

"Ah! That's the spirit. You'll be useless on this new job I shall have for you, unless you're full of fire.

It'll require courage, initiative and plenty of *go*. There's only one member of the whole family who has those qualities at present."

I waited for what I thought would be the inevitable reference to himself. But it didn't come.

"You can't guess who it is, George?"

"No——!"

"It's Molly, of course. It was she who first put me on to this gland business. That, if you like, required courage and initiative. There's a great future before Molly. She's being lost in England, and I hope when the time comes that she'll join us in the venture."

He still wouldn't tell me what this Great Idea was, but when I reached home that evening a thought suddenly struck me. I went in search of Molly, caught sight of her sitting on the top branch of the walnut tree, and shouted for her to come down.

She descended slowly and carefully.

"You shouldn't have gone up there," I said. "It is very dangerous. I thought you couldn't climb the walnut tree."

"Nor did I, till I tried hard, Daddy."

"How often have you done this?"

"Only twice. I thought the monkey might have built a nest."

I dared not tell her of its present abode in case she began clamoring for its return. So I asked, innocently:

"And had he?"

"I don't think so. But it was fun up there! I wish you'd come, Daddy. Gran'pa says *he* will when he's got those new glands."

"That reminds me," I said. "Has he told you anything about what he intends doing when he has

the glands? I mean anything more important than just climbing trees."

Molly looked down in pensive consideration. She had evidently been caught unawares.

"Out with it, my child!"

"Daddy—I can't!"

"Why not?"

"Because I promised Gran'pa I wouldn't tell. He made me swear, like this."

She moistened her right forefinger with the tip of her tongue and drew an imaginary cross in front of her throat and chest. (The wicked old sinner, intimidating my twelve-year-old offspring in this manner!)

"Are we all in this—little adventure?" I persisted.

She held her lips tightly together and stared at me in mute appeal.

Evidently we *were* all in it! Her eyes shone and I could see that she would have gloried in telling me. Nevertheless, for her oath's sake, I pressed her no further.

"It's all very, very mysterious," I murmured.

"Never mind, Daddy," she whispered. "You'll soon know all about it!"

It was very good of her to try and soothe my wounded feelings thus, and I felt more determined than ever to hasten that operation on Gran'pa and reap the rich reward which was apparently awaiting all three of us. Far too much time had already been wasted. To Gran'pa it may have represented only one little negligible week in a life of nearly a hundred years, but to me it seemed ages since my enthusiasm had been first awakened. I was eager to complete the contract, to handle that five thousand dollars, to witness the rejuvenation of my aged ancestor-in-law, and, above

all, to escape from my Government prison into the great wide spaces of the earth.

As if in answer to my wild desires, Gran'pa came out and joined us in the garden, waving a letter aloft in childish glee.

"Just come by post, George!" he cried.

"What has?"

"A note from that man with the gorilla. He wants us to go round and see it this evening."

I read the letter with feverish interest. It was written on a scrap of dirty paper with a blunt pencil, and told us that "Alfred" had been landed in England only five weeks previously. He was in "excellent health," as "hard as nails," extremely "vichous," but capable of being "broken in and trained"—if that was what we wanted him for!

"This is the very thing!" I exclaimed, presently. "We'll go at once."

"But—dinner, George?" stammered Gran'pa.

"Oh! That can wait. He says between seven and eight. It is nearly seven now, and it's silly to risk getting there too late."

We hurried indoors, bustled into our hats and coats, and made for the station.

Three-quarters of an hour later we were ushered into the presence of the "Great Animal King," a travelling showman of huge and formidable dimensions, but with the manners of a babe.

"This 'ere animull, gentlemen," he explained, as though he was addressing an audience at a fair, "is one as I bought about four weeks ago at an auction sale. I wasn't really in need of it, as you might say, but it was goin' pretty cheap, and I thought it might come in 'andy later on. An' now I 'ave got it, I can't bring

myself to like it, somehow. All the other animulls know me and, if I might say so, we has a slight affection for one another. But this brute's the queerest cuss I ever struck—ups and snarls at me every time I approaches the cage, an' begins rattling the bars like a maniac. He's as quiet as a mouse with the other chaps. It's me he don't seem to like." He spat expressively. "There's the truth in a nutshell. Now we'll go and take a look at him."

We withdrew from the elaborately fitted caravan in which we had foregathered, and began picking our way through a maze of ropes, tent-pegs and that general litter of obstacles which invariably surrounds the tents of a travelling circus or menagerie. As we approached the largest of the tents, a deep-throated roar burst on us like a sudden clap of thunder. It was followed by a medley of trumpet-like calls and bellowings. The whole place, which had been as silent as the grave when we had first arrived, was now a den of enraged and ravening animals. It was as if they were trying their utmost to scare us away.

"They seem to be very—noisy," I ventured.

"Queer things," answered the Great Animal King. "They spots a stranger at once at this time o' night. Must be the smell."

I glanced at Gran'pa, trotting along by my side, and wondered whether it was he or I who most irritated their sensitive nostrils.

"Here we are!" said our companion, lifting a great flap of canvas and allowing us to enter.

We passed into the huge arena, waited a moment until the electric light was switched on, and then began gazing at the startled animals pacing backwards and forwards behind the iron bars of their prisons.

"That's a fine brute," said the King, pointing to a great lion, which suddenly paused and eyed Gran'pa with interest.

"Y-e-s!" I said.

I didn't like the business a bit. There was something so uncanny in the spectacle of us three poor little humans surrounded by all his collection of carnivorous and hungry-looking beasts. It didn't feel safe, and the object of our visit didn't seem right and fair. It may have been an epitome of brains *versus* beef—civilization *versus* barbarism—but the whole affair savored too much of wicked cunning and evil intentions. The right and gentlemanly thing would have been for Gran'pa to have gone into that gorilla's cage unarmed—and fought for his glands. . . .

I turned and looked at the old man. He was very quiet and solemn—obsessed, no doubt, by the same thoughts as myself.

"This way, gentlemen," said our companion.

We went forward again and a few moments later the first part of our Quest for Youth was over.

"There!" said his Majesty, with a contemplative expectoration. "That's Alfred!"

For fully half a minute, there was no movement in the cage, and we merely stood gazing at a heap of slowly rising and falling straw.

Then an arm and leg protruded and stretched themselves. They were followed by one of the most hideous-looking faces imaginable. Deep-sunk, wicked little eyes glared at us from beneath heavy, overhanging ridges of bone; a cavernous mouth yawned wide open, with dreadful rows of huge teeth fringing its black-gummed edges; a thick tuft of hair oscillated up and down above the low forehead; and suddenly a nerve-

shattering roar reverberated against the wooden walls of the cage.

With a bound the animal sprang forward, flung its arm between two of the iron bars and tried to grab Gran'pa by his most cherished adornment—his long white beard.

"Look out!" I cried.

The old man jumped nimbly aside, giving a shout of amazement and clumsily treading on my toes.

I steadied him.

"You really ought to be more careful," I said, glancing at the Animal King, who was chuckling to himself.

"That chap's the very devil when he's roused," said his owner. "*Quiet,* Alfred!"

Alfred restrained himself for a moment or two, watching Gran'pa as a cat watches a mouse. There was evidently something in the old man which aroused his curiosity, as well as his anger. Or it may have been an instinctive understanding of the reason of the visit. Who knows?

"George," said Gran'pa, with heartless precision, "we shan't do better than this."

A roar from the cage greeted this remark, and Alfred flung himself at the bars and rattled and shook at them in abandoned fury.

"May I ask, gentlemen, if you're going to try and train it?" inquired the King. "Or do you want it wild?"

Gran'pa looked at him for a second or two, abstractedly.

"I don't care how wild it is. In fact the wilder, the stronger, and the more vicious—the better."

"Then you've the goods in that cage. I've handled

some of these brutes in my time. But this 'un takes the biscuit."

"No trace of consumption, I suppose?" asked Gran'pa, like a young bridegroom who has been converted to Eugenics.

"I'd eat me 'at! Look at 'im!"

Roar upon roar beat the air, as Alfred told us in his dumb, animal-like way exactly what he would do if he had only a chance.

"Quite so!" said Gran'pa. "Let's get out of here!"

Ten minutes later arrangements had been made for the safe custody of the animal up to and including the following Wednesday, when we hoped to have Gran'pa ready to receive a couple of Alfred's glands.

It was indeed a great day's work, and when we left that home of brute barbarism I couldn't help patting the old man's back.

"Satisfied?" I asked.

He answered with the deepest emotion.

"George!" he said. "I'm not a greedy man. All I ask for is about a quarter of that brute's energy. Then I'll be happy!"

CHAPTER IV

THE AVENUE HAS A SURPRISE

AFTER the hastily-arranged purchase of Alfred, the gorilla, we called next day to see Dr. Croft, the surgeon, who had been chosen to bring about the strange union of man and part monkey.

I had expected to see a man of anything from forty-five to sixty, but we were greeted, instead, by a mere youngster of about twenty-five or six.

I introduced myself and Gran'pa and got down to business at once.

"We've procured a gorilla," I said. "A fine, strapping brute of phenomenal strength and activity. If only a tenth of its energy is due to its glands, then we've found a little gold-mine."

"That's good! But I would like to examine Mr. Hadley before actually committing myself to this—undertaking. Ninety-five is a great age. He may not be able to stand the operation."

Dr. Croft became eminently practical. So did Gran'pa.

Without the least trace of mock modesty, the latter quickly divested himself of the whole of his clothes, and stood before us in the same state of nudity as when he had first appeared on earth nearly a century ago. And, when one comes to think of it, such a procedure was quite right and proper, for here was Gran'pa about to start out into the great world again, to be re-born, re-juvenated, re-vitalized, and what could be more fitting than his entering on this new birth in the

usual unclad way? The simplicity of his action moved me almost to tears. Before the throne of surgical wisdom he was no longer a dictatorial, obstinate old man, but just an obedient child awaiting the pleasure of its master.

The doctor gazed at him for a while in evident admiration.

"I must congratulate you, sir," he said. "I wouldn't have believed such a physique possible at your age."

Gran'pa lost his head a little. He commenced strutting around the room, erect, and as proud as Punch! His long white beard and grayish hair looked peculiarly unreal, and his hands and face showed the wrinkled signs of age, but the rest of his figure startled one by its quaint boyishness. Certainly, there was no elasticity in his step and no youthful swing in his carriage, but, in spite of that, he gave one the distinct impression of being a boy—dressed up in mask and wig and beard—emulating the antics of an old man!

"I've taken great care of myself," he remarked, as he drew nearer for a more minute examination. "And this is the result. A couple of years' carelessness half-a-century ago, and I mightn't have been here to-day—ready to take advantage of this wonderful discovery. Proceed, doctor!"

Dr. Croft began with the inevitable stethoscope, the tapping of chest and back, the "Say ninety-nine," the "Take a deep breath," "Now hold it!"—and so on. With grim and relentless efficiency, he delved into every nook and cranny of the old man's past and present. He pumped him of confessions which were new even to me. Physiologically and psychologically, poor old Gran'pa was turned inside out and upside down and

round about, until we had an almost complete analysis of his life. The examination was thorough, ably-conducted, and a conclusive testimony of his ability to face both the operation and the future without fear.

"I'm willing to undertake this case," said the doctor. "I may say, sir, that I am *proud* to do so."

"Good!" exclaimed Gran'pa. "When will you be ready?"

"Any time!"

"Make it to-morrow, then!"

"I shall want you under my care for at least twenty-four hours beforehand."

"Very well!"

I may be mistaken, but I have always felt that it must be extremely unnerving to face an operation when one is feeling perfectly fit and well. Even when such a course is necessary the tendency is to postpone the evil day—not to hasten it. But it was not actually necessary in Gran'pa's case; it was more in the nature of an experiment, an attempt to ward off that intangible and distant something which we call Death, a thrusting-back of the great clock-hands of Life. I felt humbled before such courage.

"You've grit, Gran'pa!" I said. "And you'll deserve—everything you get."

"Tut! tut! In a few years' time this will be one of the recognized ordeals in life, like a visit to the dentist!" he chuckled.

"That is certainly the most reasonable attitude to adopt," agreed Dr. Croft.

Gran'pa began clothing himself again, in a leisurely half-hearted fashion, which semed to suggest that, if he could have had his own way, he would have had the operation there and then.

I drew Dr. Croft a little further away and arranged everything in detail. He appeared to be a very sensible and brainy young man, and I felt that he could be trusted to do his best.

"Do you think these glands will work all right?" I asked presently.

He began making a speech. I could see it coming. I was even afraid that it might be a lecture. But I made no resistance.

"I won't say, yet," he answered. "It's not merely a question of new glands and new vital essences. At such an age as your grandfather's, a considerable hardening of the tissues and arteries has taken place. The bones are more brittle, the cartilage partly ossified, the skin less elastic, the nerves less sensitive, and, of course, the hair and teeth are going. His heart is very strong, however, and given that, I believe almost anything is possible."

I breathed a sigh of relief, and Dr. Croft proceeded to deliver a fifteen-minute technical dissertation on the cause of old age. He also spoke of the new method of rejuvenation by means of glandular graftings as if he had first learned of it in the nursery—and didn't think very much of it.

In a pessimistic peroration, he said:

"There may be a thousand and one arguments in favor of this new theory, but perhaps in the end there will be just one damning little detail which will circumvent the whole process of repair. Now you can understand why I don't wish to be too dogmatic in this case."

I did! (As a drowning man sees the lights of a distant ship.)

He began again—just as I was hoping that he had finished—and inflicted on me a further lecture, dealing

solely with the functions of "ductless glands" in general (whatever they may be).

Through the corner of my eye I saw Gran'pa fastening his braces in a quiet, contemplative manner—apparently oblivious of the fact that his possibilities were being discussed in such astounding detail. I also saw that he was having some little difficulty with his boot-laces and his collar, muttering to himself the while. No doubt the stress of the last half-hour had made him a trifle shaky. But he bore up bravely.

So did I. And then at last, I realized that Dr. Croft had finished.

My poor, numbed brain tried to grapple with this sudden influx of new knowledge. In my supreme ignorance I had hitherto looked on the body as just a fairly simple contrivance of beef, bone, blood and brain, with a digestive apparatus for turning Foods into Human Being. Instead of that, we appeared to be one conglomeration of complicated and mysterious glands. All else was merely subsidiary.

As a little child speaks to its teacher, I said:

"How many of these do you propose grafting into Gran'pa?"

"The thyroids only. We will see how these work first."

"Do you agree, Gran'pa?" I shouted.

"I leave myself entirely in Dr. Croft's hands," replied Gran'pa, doing up the last of his buttons.

"Very well," I said, turning to the doctor again. "We'll have just the two thyroids to begin with; and I'll see that he is round here by ten o'clock in the morning. Good-by!"

We escaped to the open air once more, Gran'pa

linking his arm through mine, as if in dire need of comfort.

"Last day of the old life, George," he observed, with an attempt at cheerfulness. "Let's go and have a drink, to . . . celebrate it. Thank God that, for the moment at any rate, we are in England!"

If I needed a stimulant, how much more did he?

We had two whiskies each, partly recovered our composure, and then went home.

There Gran'pa sank into his chair with a sigh and called Molly over to him.

"A little kiss, Mollikins," he said. "That's better. . . ."

And then:

"I'm tired out, George; and I've no appetite for dinner. I think I'll have a basin of bread and milk and go straight to bed. That medical examination has rather unnerved me."

"Oh, you mustn't think about it. You'll be all right after a night's rest."

"It isn't the . . . job itself. It's the thought that perhaps . . ." He pulled himself together. "Molly! A bowl of nice hot bread and milk—made by your own hands."

Molly—who could never be accused of being merely ornamental—adjourned to the kitchen, and presently returned with Gran'pa's last supper under the old régime.

He ate it a trifle sibilantly, and very thoughtfully, Molly insisting on kneeling by his side and holding the bowl as if it were an offering. I admired her tact and motherly concern.

"Night-night!" he said, at last.

"I shall give you ten minutes only," cautioned

Molly. "And then I shall come up and tuck you in—and you can tell me a story."

Gran'pa chuckled.

"Neither of us deserves her, George," he whispered, as he went by me. "She's worth half-a-dozen whiskies as a pick-me-up."

He shuffled out of the room in his carpet slippers and Molly glanced at the clock to note the time.

"Daddy," she asked, "when's he going to the doctor?"

"To-morrow, dear."

"Is it . . . *very* dangerous?"

"No! Not a bit! You mustn't worry. He'll soon be home again."

She took my hand, and looked at his empty chair by the fireside. It seemed as if some dread shadow had fallen on us. I realized how much poor old Gran'pa had become part of the house, the furniture, and even of ourselves—how keenly we should miss him during his absence in the nursing home.

The thought of the one-in-a-hundred chance of his dying was intolerable. I refused to dwell on it. Neither would I let Molly.

"You'll have great times when he does return," I said.

"I know! He's been telling me simply heaps of things he's going to do."

She grew more cheerful at the thought of this—but still kept a watchful eye on the clock.

"Time's up!" she exclaimed at last.

A moment or two later I could hear creaking movements upstairs and the faint rumble of Gran'pa's voice as he began telling her a story.

I listened for several minutes; and then silence descended—and so did Molly.

"He's gone to sleep," she half-whispered. "He often does that when he's story-telling."

"Just as well, my child. . . . Now for dinner!"

The meal passed quietly and a little sadly. Try as I would, it seemed impossible to shake off the air of anxiety which had settled on us

But the next morning everyone was bright and cheerful again. It may have been due to the bustle and excitement—and the really excellent breakfast which Nanny had prepared for us.

Gran'pa and I went to Dr. Croft's in a taxi, and Alfred arrived an hour or so later in a Ford van—after which I bade the old man good-bye and good luck.

"Don't let Molly worry over me, George," he said. "Everything will turn out all right in the end. I can *feel* it. 'Phone up Dr. Croft to-morrow and drop in to see me the day after. You won't know me! . . . Au revoir!"

I returned home. The day dragged slowly by; so did the morning of the next.

At one o'clock I rang up Dr. Croft.

"Well?" I asked, as soon as I heard his voice. "How is the old chap?"

"Excellent! He refused at first to believe that the operation had been performed. I never met such a man. Now he's actually asking for his pipe."

"That sounds healthy! No danger of a relapse, I suppose?"

"Practically none. The anæsthetic was the only risk at his age."

"Give him my love—and Molly's—and tell him I'll be round for a chat to-morrow."

A minute later, Molly and Nanny heard the good news. The former received it joyfully, but the latter a little sceptically—as if convinced that no good could possibly come of such irreverent tamperings with Nature's laws of growth and decay.

"I do hope he'll recover," said the poor old soul. "I've missed him a good deal."

"We all have, Nanny. But we've suffered in a good cause. So has Gran'pa. It requires some courage to strike out afresh at his age. He's an example to the old men of his generation."

A reaction set in at once. I felt not only a sense of great relief, but also one of exhilaration. My curiosity was intense.

How soon (if ever) would Gran'pa begin to show signs of approaching youth? Would he rejuvenate mentally or only physically? Would he show merely less tendency to doze and mumble, or would he become the alert and energetic man he was fifty years ago? Supposing the whole affair simply resulted in a mere prolongation of life—stripped of all its zest—what then? Would he, or any of us, be the happier for it? Wouldn't it be rather pointless?

I must admit that (quite apart from the monetary reward for my industry) I was in favor of complete rejuvenation—something which would reduce his age to about forty, say. There were big possibilities if this happened; and I wanted to share in them.

But, as I had expected, he progressed very slowly at first.

When I saw him the day after the operation he was still Gran'pa—as old as ever, and just as deaf. He talked a great deal, and pretended to feel much better

already. He even asserted that his appetite had improved—a sure sign of youthfulness!

As time went on, however, I noted the coming of a distinct glow in his cheeks, a brightness in his eyes, a clearness in his voice, and an improvement in his hearing. But all these I put down to the few weeks he had spent under the care of a trained nurse, and to the tablets of thyroid extract which he had also been taking. It seemed absurd to attribute any change yet to Alfred's glandular influence.

At the end of the third week I arranged to fetch Gran'pa home the following Wednesday and, immediately I announced the news, the house was upside down with excitement and anticipation.

Molly, whom I had taken with me twice to see the invalid, was like a little wild thing. Every hour of the day she was bursting out with fresh ideas of how she could best welcome Gran'pa back to the fold.

For myself, I looked forward to his return not only with curiosity but with pleasure. The house had not been the same since he left it. We all felt that. Time and time again Nanny confessed that there was "something missing. . . ."

On the Monday afternoon I was standing at the window, thinking that, within forty-eight hours, we should all be happily united again, when suddenly I heard a shriek from Molly in the garden. A moment later I saw her dash towards the gate and, following the direction of her gaze, an astounding vision greeted me. Gran'pa was coming down the street by himself!

When I say "coming," I say it reservedly. It is a weak and inadequate word with which to describe his method of arrival.

Gran'pa—the horrible truth must out!—was *scoot-*

ing! He was not doing it with one foot standing on a strip of board and the other knocking against the pavement, as is the wont of small children, but with both feet firmly placed on a platform of spacious dimensions and both hands gripping a pair of elaborately-fitted handlebars. He was seated, too! In other words, he had reached that acme of modern locomotion—the motor scooter!

He came down our sedate and peaceful Avenue at a good, steady ten miles an hour, with his long beard parted by the playful breeze and his hat pulled down over his eyes—a mad caricature of an old man of ninety-five, a dream, a nightmare!

I saw some little children come running round the corner of the road, like a pack of hounds after a fox. And I saw startled faces appear at windows and doors, the most startled and shocked of all being Mrs. Tarrant, the wife of the Baptist minister. I even saw the dim, blue outline of a policeman slowly approaching from the opposite direction.

It was a terrible situation for a man like myself—a respectable and trusted Servant of the Public—to know that in a moment or two Gran'pa would pull up at my front door and bring eternal shame and ridicule on the family.

In spite of this, however, I could not refrain from dashing bareheaded into the street and adding myself to that scandalized string of spectators which now dotted both sides of the Avenue.

Molly was laughing, and clapping her hands joyfully.

"I knew it was Gran'pa!" she cried. "And—he's got a motor scooter!"

Even to her childlike and finite intelligence the painful truth was obvious.

"Restrain yourself!" I admonished. "Do think of the neighbors!"

And then Gran'pa drew his machine up at the side of the pavement. There was a sharp explosion, a puff of smoke issued from the rear of the platform, and strange quivers shook the framework.

The next moment Gran'pa toppled over into the gutter, where he began struggling with levers, handlebars and revolving wheels. The motor scooter seemed to be trying either to escape from or run over its passenger; but thanks to Gran'pa's extraordinary presence of mind, he managed to touch the right button, and the thing at last became silent and lifeless.

I helped him to his feet.

"Thank you, George!" he said, with an air of breezy politeness.

"Don't mention it," I replied beneath my breath. "Anything I can do to hasten the termination of this insane exhibition of childish enthusiasm. . . ." I lost myself in the attempt to express my precise emotions.

"A mere side-slip," he murmured, using his hand as a species of carpet-beater. "I had a little trouble in starting, but didn't expect this." He again struck dust from his coat and trousers.

Molly's self-control gave way and she broke into an unmusical "run" of explosive giggles.

I looked at Gran'pa, smacking himself; at Molly, trying to stuff a handkerchief into her mouth; at the ugly, motionless machine in the gutter; at the sprawling patch of grease on the pavement; and, lastly, at the inevitable "gathering of clans"—that conver-

gence of fellow creatures on any scene which is rich in "possibilities."

"Molly! Take that wretched contrivance 'round to the back," I commanded, at the same time seizing Gran'pa by the arm.

But, with a sudden twist, the old man freed himself, and behaved like a schoolboy with a new bicycle.

"*No!*" he said, firmly. "I'll look after that, thank you!"

"I don't care who looks after it," I snapped, "so long as we get the beastly thing away before the crowd arrives."

"All right, George! You needn't lose your temper!"

He caught hold of the handlebars and I picked up his hat from the pavement. Much to the spectators' amusement (and sorrow), we hastily withdrew to the security of the back garden, where Gran'pa again began to make himself objectionable.

"I'm afraid it may have been damaged," he said, peering round and about it. "I'll just try it down the path here."

"If you run into my celery bed I'll murder you!" I growled in the *sotto voce* I so often adopted with the old man.

But this time he had actually heard!

"Don't be irritable, George! And don't mumble under your breath. Speak up!"

He placed his right foot on board, pulled a lever, pushed off with his left foot, and away he went, with a quick little "*chug-chug-chug.*" Where the gooseberry bushes bordered the narrow path, he swerved a little, and again where the celery beds lay on each side of

him like newly-dug graves, but, save for these two temporary diversions, he kept a straight and steady course until he reached the fowl-run at the extreme end of the garden. There he suddenly turned at right angles and disappeared.

I looked at Molly, who had been standing spell-bound and inarticulate by my side. To me, Gran'pa's antics had been an annoying revelation of puerile activity, but to Molly they had been a sheer miracle of delight. A motor scooter alone would have entranced her; so would a rejuvenated great-great-grandfather. The combination of the two, however, had simply paralyzed her. She was in a wonderful present, but at the same time, the little minx evidently had her mind's eye on a still more wonderful and fruitful future.

"*Daddy!*" she exclaimed breathlessly.

I turned a sad and disillusioned face to her.

"Isn't it simply *scrumptious!*" she continued with unabated enthusiasm.

"It's very undignified for a man of his age and respectability—bringing shame on his relations like this."

"You aren't really angry, Daddy?"

"I'm more than angry. I can see red—scarlet!"

"*Chug-chug-chug,*" I heard in the distance.

Then a single, clear-cut: "*Bang!*"

Then silence.

"If he's run into those Buff Orpington's," I cried, "there'll be a murder committed!"

But no! Gran'pa had evidently stopped his machine merely to turn round and start on the homeward journey again.

"*Pop-pop-pop!*"

Then that quiet, steady "*Chug-chug-chug*" once

more, and the ungodly contrivance came spinning round the corner and up the garden path at a good ten to twelve miles an hour.

"It—goes—fine!" panted Gran'pa as he alighted by our side.

"Suppose we garage it in the coal-house," I suggested, dully. "Then we might go indoors and leave the neighbors in peace."

I motioned in the direction of five or six back bedroom windows, behind whose curtains we saw the dim outlines of a score of curious faces peering down on us.

"The scullery or kitchen would be much cleaner and better," said Gran'pa.

I glared at him with awful severity.

"Do you want Nanny to give notice?" I inquired.

"Not at all! Not at all! A very capable woman. A bit fractious at times, perhaps. . . . But I don't see how she can object to a little thing like this. . . ."

"Oh! Don't you? Very well! Try her! I wash my hands of the whole affair."

Then Molly joined in. *She* wanted to scoot! Naturally, she did! It was excusable at her immature age. But I was adamant.

"No!" I said. "Go indoors, Molly, at once!"

"But—Daddy. . . ."

"No 'buts'! Do as I tell you. We've had quite enough excitement for one day."

"A little run down the garden wouldn't hurt her, George," pleaded Gran'pa.

I could see at once that if I didn't treat them both as a couple of unruly children there was going to be still worse trouble in the future. So I wrested the machine from Gran'pa, overcame my own desire to

test it, and wheeled it quickly towards the coal-house, while Molly and the old man followed ruefully and protestingly behind.

Only when the thing was safely garaged and under lock and key did I once more feel at ease.

"You're acting in a very high-handed manner, George," said Gran'pa.

"It is necessary!"

"Tut—tut!"

"It's not 'tut-tut!'" I snapped, completely losing my temper. "This is my house and my garden—and my child. I won't have them publicly disgraced and demoralized by such clownish antics. Do try and be a reasonable person and think of your dignity—even if you won't think of mine."

He grew calmer and more docile at that. He even performed the unnerving ceremony of apologizing.

"That's all right," I answered, hurriedly. "Let's get in the house and hide. I feel that every eye in the Avenue is on this place. We're visible even from here."

He glanced up at the bedroom windows of the two neighboring houses, and at last retreated through the kitchen door.

In the sheltered security of my own dining-room I sought further information on this strange outbreak of second childhood. With a look of the utmost parental severity, I checked Molly's excited flow of questions and ordered her either to leave the room or to be quiet. Seeing that I was roused and angry, she tactfully obeyed, and sat down on the edge of a chair, staring at Gran'pa in wide-eyed admiration and amazement. I turned and faced him.

"I think you'll admit. . . ." I began, sternly.

"I won't admit anything, George, if you're going

to adopt that lecturing attitude. Give it up! It irritates me. Is it a lifelong habit or have you acquired it only since *I* came to live with you?"

With a thoughtful and ominous precision, I filled my pipe and lit it.

"Thank you!" said Gran'pa, extending his hand.

"I beg your pardon!" I replied, frigidly giving him my pouch.

"Now, George!"

For five or six more awful seconds I kept my face straight and dignified. Then I gave way. I couldn't help it. I laughed—and laughed—and laughed. That vision of Gran'pa, coming down the Avenue on his scooter, reminded me of a performing ape, I had once seen, careering round the Coliseum stage on a tiny motor cycle. I thought of the face of the Baptist minister's wife, three doors further down the street. I thought of the patch of oily messiness on the pavement outside. And I thought of all the serious nonsense we had gone through to bring about this sudden spurt of venturesomeness in poor old Gran'pa.

"Why—*did* you—do it?" I gurgled.

"Come, come, George! Do pull yourself together."

I quietened down a little and wiped my eyes.

"Have you been properly discharged?" I asked. "Or is it an escape?"

Gran'pa didn't like the last word. He lit his pipe and puffed at it, furiously.

"I left Dr. Croft's because I've practically recovered and because I never did like hospitals."

"But why did the doctor arrange for me to come and fetch you next Wednesday?"

"I haven't the least idea. I felt extremely well

this morning and I thought I would return home. That's all!"

"Couldn't you get a taxi?" I asked.

"Perhaps I'd better explain. After lunch I went out for a stroll and noticed one of these motor scooters in a shop-window. It looked very enticing, George. So I entered the shop and inquired. The man got me to try it down the backyard once or twice."

"Ah! That's the modern enterprising salesman all over. He didn't care whether you broke your neck or not so long as he got your money."

"Nothing of the sort. He thought I wanted it for someone else and even offered to send it."

"How perfectly charming of him!"

Gran'pa ignored the comment and continued:

"It was only after I'd tried it once or twice that I suddenly realized how enjoyable it would be to get one. So I bought it, with the intention of returning to the hospital. On the way back, however, I altered my mind. I don't like that nurse, George. She would only have carried on to me about it if I'd returned on that scooter. So I changed my mind—and came home instead. . . ."

"Then neither the doctor nor the nurse knows where you are?" I gasped.

"No! You might ring up after dinner and tell them."

"*You* might!"

"Very well, George!" he answered, affably. "Don't let us quarrel over trifles."

I gazed at him, pensively.

"Do you attribute all this superabundance of energy to the—glands?" I asked.

"I think they've helped. I feel fitter than I've done for years."

He certainly looked it.

The following morning I handed him my copy of *The Daily Sketch,* on the front page of which was a large photograph of Gran'pa speeding down Regent Street on his scooter.

"You'll be pleased to find yourself in the papers already," I remarked, dryly.

"You don't say so!"

"Yes, I do. But it's nothing to what I *think!*"

"Mollikins!" he cried with the enthusiasm of a twelve-year-old schoolboy. "Come and look at this!"

She darted to his side and together they pored over the pictorial journalist's idea of "news."

Before I left for town that morning, I took Nanny aside.

"For Heaven's sake," I warned her, "keep an eye on those two and see that they don't get into mischief while I'm away."

CHAPTER V

THE DUG-OUT IN THE GARDEN

AFTER making all the allowance I could for Gran'pa's novel home-coming, I was under the impression that once those new glands were safely embedded in him his progress from old age to youth would be a slow and rhythmic movement, like the gradual and normal recovery from an illness. But, alas, I was mistaken. There was no doubt about Gran'pa's progress, but instead of being steady and even, it followed a wild zigzag course, interspersed with sudden outbreaks of half-delirious childishness. To-day, he was sensible and quiet and dignified. To-morrow, he was silly and noisy and skittish. He had apparently either developed a dual character or was suffering from a grave lack of self-control.

The only reasonable explanation I can give of these phenomena is that Gran'pa had been dozing and dreaming in the peaceful backwaters of life until he had grown extremely stiff and awkward. Now that he was at last awakening, he was metaphorically pinching himself, stretching, kicking out, getting rid of that objectionable " pins-and-needles " sensation, and giving vent to little whoops of joy at finding the grim nightmare of impending death was untrue. In this half-sleeping, half-waking state, his perspective naturally was distorted, and he did many things which were shamefully undignified and childish. The experiment with the motor scooter was certainly the most dramatic of all these "outbreaks," for it was the least expected, and had found me totally unprepared.

As the days passed, however, I grew more accustomed to his freaks, and came to regard them as the natural result of adding another "young" member to the family. Some men would undoubtedly have called in a mental specialist when Gran'pa attached half a walnut shell to the kitten's tail and spent the whole morning watching the poor little creature waltzing and somersaulting round the dining-room floor. But I preferred to adopt the more Christian-like attitude of viewing the incident merely as a good-humored, boyish lark. After all, it didn't hurt the cat and it certainly amused Gran'pa and kept him out of further mischief—so what harm was there?

But when he began inciting Molly, who was already quite enough of a handful, I found it necessary to be very firm with him.

Without wishing to give the impression that I'm a kill-joy where youngsters are concerned, I must admit that I believe in a certain amount of juvenile restraint, even in these days of enlightenment and free education.

The case in point—which is only one of many dozens which occurred in the six months succeeding the operation—was actually due to my own thoughtlessness, and I record it in detail to show that one cannot be too careful when dealing with the young.

Ever since Molly was eight years old, I had celebrated her birthday by taking her to see that hardy old stage annual "Peter Pan." This year, I thought that it would be a gracious act to include Gran'pa in the ceremony, more particularly as he had just paid me that initial five thousand dollars, due under Clause 3 (*a*) of our written agreement.

So the three of us journeyed up to town early, had

dinner, and then went to the theatre to see Barrie's wonderful version of Eternal Youth.

As Gran'pa had not been to a theatre since he was sixty-five—that is over thirty years previously—it was not surprising to find him deeply moved by the opening scene in the nursery. When Mrs. Darling sang her three offspring to sleep in their little cots, I noticed Gran'pa sentimentally blinking his eyes.

Presently, Peter Pan entered and Gran'pa sat up and became very restless. He craned his neck upwards and forwards and sideways to improve his view of the stage; he twitched, he made little excited grunts of merriment, he giggled when Peter let Tinker-bell out of the drawer, and he roared when the boys began taking lessons in the art of flying.

As the play proceeded so Gran'pa's excitement grew, until people in front commenced turning around and glowering at us.

"Restrain yourself, Gran'pa!" I whispered, nudging him in the ribs.

"Do what, George?" he asked, without even taking his eyes off the stage.

"Keep quiet and don't fidget so much."

"But it's so *exciting!*"

He quietened down for a little while, but completely lost his head when the underground scene came on. The first appearance of the pirates and the wolves had been trying enough to his feeble powers of self-restraint, but they were nothing to those thrilling moments, when the pirates vanquished the Indians and captured the children, and the green-faced Captain Hook poisoned Peter's medicine.

When the curtain dropped on that scene, Gran'pa was in a terrible state of excitement.

"Come and have a brandy," I whispered.

"Thanks, George! I think I will."

I led him to the bar and there he steadied his nerves and I quenched my thirst.

After that, he was much better and managed, without collapsing, to get through the ghastly nightmare of the Doodle-Doo Quest on the Pirate Ship. But there were moments when Molly and I were compelled to hold him down in his seat.

"Disgraceful!" I heard someone growl behind us.

"Absurd, bringing a doddering old chap of that age!" whispered another.

In spite of the low, angry murmurs of the audience in our immediate vicinity, we contrived, however, to sit through the whole play without causing a riot, and when we eventually left the theatre, I explained to Gran'pa exactly what I thought of him.

"I couldn't—help it!" he said listlessly, as if every drop of his energy had gone.

"But it's so pitifully weak and selfish, behaving as you did," I remonstrated. "Think how it annoyed the other members of the audience."

He tried to answer but could not.

Then his legs gave way, and he suddenly sat down on the pavement and began crying hysterically.

I called a taxi, gathered him up, and hustled him into it, where he sat twitching in the corner like a man with Saint Vitus' dance.

Although I don't pretend to understand very much about medical science, I do know that thyroid gland secretion has a remarkably stimulating effect on the mental faculties. With too little of it, one is dull and

lifeless; with too much of it, one is active and highly strung. Could it be that Alfred's glands were too vigorous, and that what was normally good for monkey was abnormally bad for man? It was a very discomfiting thought, and I grew so alarmed at Gran'pa's condition that I decided to get him a bromide draught. It would, at any rate, afford temporary relief.

So we drew up at the nearest chemist's shop, where I bought Gran'pa a soothing powder.

"Stick your tongue out," I ordered, when I returned to the taxi.

He protested at first, but soon gave way, and I carefully tipped the white pacifier into the centre of the scoop-shaped receptacle which he was holding out in readiness.

"Now swill it down with this," I said, handing him a glass of water.

Again he obeyed.

Then he settled back in his corner and fell sound asleep.

"This is cheerful!" I thought. "How on earth are we going to get him into the train at Waterloo?"

I considered the matter for a moment, and finally came to the conclusion that we should have to taxi home.

Much to Molly's delight, I broke the news to the reluctant driver, and away we sped at last.

When we got back, Nanny and I put Gran'pa to bed, gave him a glass of hot milk and hoped for the best.

The following morning he came down to breakfast, looking more aggressively energetic than ever.

"You're very full of beans," I said.

He braced his shoulders.

"Yes," he replied. "It must have been that powder, George!"

"That was a *soothing* powder, man!" I exclaimed. "Not a tonic."

"You don't say so!"

"I certainly bought it as such!"

He looked into the fire for a moment or so, in mild contemplation. Then he turned to me again.

"That was a wonderful play, George. D'you know any more like it?"

"No! It's unique. Even if it were not, I wouldn't take you to another of the same kind."

"Why not?"

"Can't you remember?"

"I recollect being very interested in it."

"Is that all?" I gasped.

He paused.

"I was dreaming a good deal last night," he confessed, sheepishly.

"What sort of dreams?"

"Oh! Nightmare and things. . . . That fellow Captain Hook was after me. So were those wolves."

His eyes were shining and his cheeks glowing. There was no doubt that "Peter Pan" had left a very vivid impression on him.

"Would you like me to send for Dr. Croft?" I asked.

"No! Certainly not! Don't *you* ever get . . . roused, George?"

"Yes! I did last night!"

"Wonderful play!" he murmured, entirely missing my point. "Wonderful . . . !"

That was the refrain throughout breakfast. Both

Molly and he excitedly went over nearly every detail of the piece. Wolves, Indians, Pirates, Underground Houses, Mermaids, Fairies—all these provided far more sustenance than mere marmalade and toast and bacon. Indeed, for the next week or so "Peter Pan" was the chief topic of conversation between the juvenile and rejuvenated members of the household. It became an obsession with them.

I couldn't understand it, because no play, however wonderful, could possibly produce such an effect by itself. Was there any other influence at work on Molly and Gran'pa? I concluded that there was, for presently they began whispering together, nudging one another, and occasionally making furtive signs during meal-times.

"What are you both up to?" I asked one day. "Why do you keep winking at your grandfather, Molly?"

"It's . . . only in fun, Daddy."

"Quite so! But what is the fun?"

"Don't bully her, George!" butted in Gran'pa.

"Is this *my* child, or yours?" I demanded.

The old sinner's eyes twinkled.

"I'm remotely responsible," he said.

"You're directly responsible for some other underhand work that is going on. Since you two have joined forces, Molly's behavior has become the last word in 'Frightfulness.' That's bad enough in all conscience, after the years of good example I've set her, but what really hurts is the fact that she neglects me, too. I might easily be a stranger in my own house!"

Molly was at my side in a second, with her arms

round my neck and a glowing little cheek pressed against mine.

"*Daddy!* I don't neglect you! I only play with Gran'pa more than I used to."

"You never play with me," I growled.

"Oo—oo—oo! . . . I did last night!"

"Merely out of pity. You didn't want to."

"Only because I was tired, Daddy. . . ."

"There you are! Why are you so tired nowadays? You didn't used to be. It's because you waste all your energy larking with Gran'pa, while I'm slaving at the office all day. Then there is nothing left for me in the evenings."

I caught her glancing fearfully in the old man's direction, and knew at once that they actually *were* up to something.

"Gran'pa," I said. "What is this terrible secret which is eating into my daughter's life and destroying our happy home?"

"Don't be absurd, George!"

"Very well! I shall find out sooner or later. . . ."

Both Molly and her confederate grew very quiet at this threat of ultimate discovery.

I looked at Gran'pa sternly.

"Is it," I asked, "anything to do with that wonderful project, about which you have confided in Molly, but not in me?"

"You silly old Daddy! Of course it isn't!" cried Molly.

"Nothing whatever to do with it, George!" corroborated Gran'pa.

Molly pushed her fingers pensively through my hair. She was evidently wavering.

"Shall I tell him?" she pleaded at last to her abettor.

"It's not fair to worry her like this, George!" he exclaimed.

"All right! Don't bother! The day has evidently come when even my own child turns against me."

Molly was now on the verge of confession but at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour, Gran'pa overcame her. He deliberately placed the forefinger of his right hand in his mouth, took it out again and made the sign of a cross on his beard! Molly watched him, like a rabbit hypnotized by a snake.

"I can't, Daddy!" she murmured, clutching spasmodically at my hair. "It's wicked to break a promise. . . ."

And that is precisely where the matter stood for the next two days. My curiosity pulled one way and Molly's honor the other. I think the two forces were about equally matched. Luck, however, eventually gave my side the advantage—and the dread secret was suddenly out in all its startling nakedness.

One evening, instead of returning home about six, as I had expected, I came back a couple of hours earlier. It was a cold, wet, miserable winter's day, and I naturally concluded that Molly and Gran'pa would be amusing themselves in front of a roaring fire. Imagine my surprise when Nanny said that they were in the toolhouse outside—"making something."

I hurried out to see what mischief was afoot; but there was no sign of them anywhere.

"That's funny," I said to Nanny. "They're not there. Are you certain?"

"Quite!" she answered, a little wearily. "They've been out since two o'clock."

I went to the tool-house again, and even looked under and into things. Still no trace!

"They must be indoors!" I said.

Nanny looked at me wildly. The last few weeks had told on her, and I regret to say that she was not the woman she had been.

"They went out at two," she reiterated, slowly and firmly. "And they've not come back into *this* house again, or I should have seen them."

"But—they must be somewhere!" I exclaimed, growing alarmed.

"I'm sure they're old enough to look after themselves. I've got plenty to do without. . . ."

"Come, come, Nanny! Don't lose your temper!"

"Lose my temper!" she cried, suddenly bursting the dams which had been holding back the accumulated floods of weeks of storm and tempest. "If you'd had to put up with half what I have, you'd pack up your things and go this very minute."

"But why didn't you tell me of this before?"

She snorted.

"Tch! You are just as bad yourself! It's wicked, that's what I call it! The Almighty never intended us to live as long as your grandfather hopes to—and it's going against His laws to start cutting up all those poor little defenceless monkeys. It's disgusting. . . . To think of that old man capering about with those nasty little animal glands in him!"

It was the first time I had ever seen dear old Nanny really lose her temper. I was simply spellbound.

"Nanny . . ." I began.

"Don't you 'Nanny' me! I've had enough of it. There hasn't been a moment's peace since the day your grandfather first put foot here. He's a Godless

old man and ought to know better at his time of life. I won't stay in this house after to-night. No! not if you offered me a fortune!"

"You don't mean . . ."

She flamed out again.

"Not for a *fortune!*"

She suddenly rushed from the kitchen, upstairs, and into her own room.

I heard the door crash to with nerve-shattering emphasis. Then a deadly silence enveloped the house.

"Good Lord!" I gasped.

For a full minute I stood quite still, paralyzed and helpless. This, surely, was the beginning of the end. Without Nanny, life was unthinkable—comfortless—void!

I gazed miserably at the wretched English winter outside, and it seemed to symbolize all the grayness and coldness of the future. It also drew my attention to the fact that Molly and Gran'pa had still to be found. Where were they? Where could they be?

I put on my hat and coat and hurried down the garden in the pouring rain.

"Molly!" I cried. "Where are you?"

The trees sighed and shook a deluge of tears on me.

"Confound the old fool!" I muttered, floundering through the mud and filth which surrounded the fowl-pens.

Even the hens themselves withdrew from my wrath.

"Are you there?" I clamored, thrusting my hand through the low doorway.

The only answer was a scurrying on the part of the feathered folk. . . .

I stood up again and looked around the deserted and sodden garden. As I did so, I saw a thin thread

of blue smoke dismally ascending from the midst of the raspberry canes.

"Ah!" I cried. "So that's where you are!"

In a second, I had bounded over the squelching celery bed and cabbage patch and reached the tell-tale spot.

"Molly!" I shouted.

The sound of voices reached me from the bowels of the earth! Puzzled and angry, I thrust aside the wet and clammy canes, stepped forward—and suddenly found myself treading on air.

When I had recovered from the jolt and splash, it became apparent that I was now at the bottom of a huge rectangular hole some four or five feet in depth, and that the "floor" on which I stood, ankle deep in mud, rose at a fairly steep angle to the normal level of the garden. With my characteristic bad luck, I had plunged in at the "deep end."

Turning quickly round, I discovered what was obviously the entrance to nothing more nor less than a crudely fashioned "dug-out" or underground retreat, which was shut off from the outer world by an improvised door of patchwork pieces of wood. From behind this, proceeded the faint sound of human voices, apparently shouting some sort of primitive song: *"Wah-wah! Wah-wah-woo!"*

I listened for a moment or two. Then I sniffed at the unmistakable odor of grilled kippers—the kind of nauseating smell one usually associates with gypsies' tents, caravans and cheap lodging-houses.

Here, at last was the explanation of all these weeks of secrecy and furtiveness on the part of Molly and Gran'pa! This is what had happened through taking

them to see the underground scene in "Peter Pan." This was how they showed their gratitude!

I thrust a hand between the soft muddy earth and the top of the "door," tugged, and down it came with a splash, followed by a gush of foul smoke and kipper-laden air.

The *"Wah-wah-woo!"*-ing ceased, and an ominous silence reigned in its place.

I waited for the poisonous fumes to clear a little, and then ducked my head and peered into the dug-out. In the light of a couple of candles and a blazing wood-fire, I caught sight of Molly, hastily removing a kipper impaled on the end of a pointed stick, and Gran'pa thrusting a half loaf of bread into his pocket.

"Come out!" I shouted.

Molly emerged, slowly and sheepishly. She was wet through, muddy, black-faced and reeking with the mingled odors of damp earth, smoke, and grilled fish. As she stood before me, she shivered in the cold and driving rain.

I tried to convey to her some idea of my utter amazement and anger, but realized that the English language was not intended for the expression of such powerful emotions as mine were at that moment.

"Go into the house, immediately!" I cried at last. "You'll catch your death of cold!"

"Daddy. . . ." she began wheedlingly.

"Don't you touch me! I'm dirty enough already! . . . . *Scoot!*"

She scooted; and I went in and hauled out Gran'pa who was behaving like a sulky schoolboy. I was mad with him—mad at the dangerous complications which might follow Molly's exposure to such weather.

"I daren't say what I think of you!" I flamed.

"But I'll tell you my opinion of myself. I was a fool ever to help you in this idiotic monkey business. You may have been troublesome in the old days, but you were at least harmless. Now, you've become not only a nuisance to the whole household, but a menace as well. A thundering good hiding is what you really deserve. . . ."

He shrank back into the cover of the dug-out and the rain pelted down on me in torrents.

"Oh! Don't be afraid!" I said. "I wouldn't touch you for worlds. If you wish, you can stay and 'pig' it in there for all eternity. I'm certainly not going to ask you into *my* house again."

I looked at his mud-stained beard, his grubby face, his dirty clothes, and his filthy hands, and suddenly my anger gave way to a feeling of disgust and repulsion.

Without another word, I turned, and strode quickly towards the house.

CHAPTER VI

GRAN'PA REFORMS

THE immediate result of this latest of Gran'pa's outbreaks was that he stopped in his dug-out all night! About eleven o'clock that evening, after Molly had had a hot bath and gone to bed, I cooled down sufficiently to go out and see what had become of him. And there he was—crouched pathetically in front of a bright stick fire, looking like the sole survivor of some lost tribe of ancient wanderers. His head was in his hands, his beard hung tragically between his knees, and his back was bent in a dismal arch of resignation under the bludgeonings of Fate.

But the moment I tried to persuade him to behave like a reasonable man and come indoors, his attitude changed to one of stark, brute fury. He sprang to his feet and stood glaring and growling at me, as if he were some wild animal at bay. The firelight danced on his muddy and saturated clothes, and threw a weird, jumping, ape-like shadow on the wall of the dug-out. His eyes shone like balls of fire.

"Get out!" he said hoarsely. And then, with an ominous calm: "*By God!* if you don't, I'll brain you!"

He seized a huge, twisted branch, whose one end had been helping to feed the fire, and waved it, torch-like, in my face.

I floundered backwards, through the mud and water until I reached the level of the garden above.

"Gran'pa!" I implored. "For heaven's sake . . . ."

"Go—when I tell you!" he screamed, emerging into the open. "I will *not* return to that house!"

"But. . . .you can't stay here. . . ." I began, again.

"Who's going to stop me?"

"You're wet through. Do remember your age, and be reasonable. This is absurd! . . . . I don't understand. . . ."

"Oh! Go to blazes! I've had enough of your insults and bickerings. I shall stay here until the morning. Then I shall leave this benighted house and country and return to the States! Do you understand *that?*"

He returned to his shelter, thrust his weapon of attack back into the fire again, and took up an alert and threatening attitude, showing not the remotest sign of a compromise.

"Very well!" I said.

I went indoors again, flabbergasted at this tremendous burst of passionate resentment and childish obstinacy.

I thought of obtaining the help of a doctor, or a neighbor, or the police; but to tell the truth I was afraid that if Gran'pa were removed from his dugout by force he might lose his mental balance altogether and become a raving maniac.

For the time being, there semed to be nothing that I could do. On the other hand, it was hopeless to think of going to bed. With Molly showing signs of having caught a very severe cold, with Nanny determined to leave me next day, and with Gran'pa crouching in that damp and miserable shelter down the garden, it would have been impossible for me to sleep a wink. The whole of my little, orderly world was topsy-turvy.

In my misery, I cursed science in general; I cursed Alfred the gorilla; I cursed Dr. Croft; and I even cursed Sir James Barrie for writing "Peter Pan."

I pictured those happy, peaceful days when Gran'pa

had nodded at his unrejuvenated ease by the fireside—and life had been one smooth, eventless stream of comfort and solace after the day's work.

To think that this chaotic disturbance should have been caused by a mere couple of innocent looking thyroid glands! To think that, after all these years, dear, motherly old Nanny was going to leave us to fend for ourselves—or to leave us to the mercy of some cold-blooded, professional housekeeper.

With a sigh, I drew up my chair before the fire, and prepared to pass a night of comfortless dozings and painful cogitations on the future.

About one o'clock I woke with a start from an evil dream in which Gran'pa figured as a wild man of the woods, pursuing innocent children and hurrying them to some terrible and uncertain doom. In his cave were scattered the whitened remains of little human bones. . . .

At two o'clock I shook off the vestiges of a pitiful scene in which the old man had been lying in a great four-poster bed, with his long gray beard streaming over a red and yellow counterpane.

"I'm. . . .dying, George!" he had whispered.

Scared and shaken, I sprang to my feet and determined to make still another appeal to his better nature.

The rain had ceased and a full moon shed its cold and pitiless light on the scene as I stood remonstrating and pleading with him.

"I'll apologize for everything, if you'll only come indoors," I said, humbly.

"No!. . . .Go away!"

"Can I. . . .bring you anything hot to drink?" I asked.

He made no answer; but, full of hope, I hurried into

the house again, lighted the gas stove, and heated up a pint of milk, which I poured into a large jug, adding a tablespoonful of Bovril to the steaming contents. With happy inspiration, I also half-filled a tumbler with neat whiskey. Surely such tokens of affectionate consideration would move him!

But no! For a moment or two he stood eying the jug and glass, which I had fearfully placed on the threshold of his retreat.

"The one's milk and Bovril, and the other's whiskey . . . ." I said encouragingly.

He advanced a few steps, hesitated, and then suddenly picked up the jug and flung its contents at me.

"You ungrateful old beast!" I cried, as the hot liquid struck my face.

"Get away, then!"

Stooping down, he seized the glass in his right hand, and I hurriedly backed to a safer distance.

A second or so later the glass was empty; but instead of the whiskey joining the little rivulets of milk running down my clothes, it was securely inside Gran'pa, who was smacking his lips appreciatively.

"Thank you—George!" he gulped.

"Now, do come indoors!" I pleaded, with great self-control.

"No. . . ." he growled.

I could see that he was weakening, however, and I took advantage of the fact.

"It's only two o'clock," I went on. "That means another six hours until breakfast time—six hours before it's even light."

The thought of it made me shudder.

"I won't. . . .give way," he mumbled. "I've put up with too much from you as it it is. . . .NO!"

"All right! I've done everything that is humanly possible. I've lowered my dignity sufficiently to apologize, and I've offered to forgive and forget. . . ."

"Don't be melodramatic!"

"Then you absolutely insist on wallowing in this filth until morning?"

"I do!"

Again I withdrew.

So the weary hours of the night dragged slowly on. In front of the blazing fire indoors my mind constantly reverted to that cold and cheerless underground cell in which Gran'pa was doing voluntary penance for his misdeeds. I thought also of the morrow when he and Nanny were going to leave us for ever. Molly, too, claimed my worried attention. Poor little Molly! She would lose a playmate. Since Gran'pa's rejuvenescence he and Molly had been the closest of chums. They had motor-scooted; they had climbed trees; they had met as equals in the great world of juvenile fiction which littered Molly's "sanctum." In short, Gran'pa had been to her that elder brother for whom she had craved since almost the first day when she could walk and talk.

And now this was to be the end—a wretched quarrel, an estrangement, a stumbling away of Gran'pa into the big dark world, which lay beyond what had been the brightest little home in Airesdale Avenue. . . .

Even as I pondered on this scurvy trick of Fate's, I heard a distinct bump on the ceiling overhead. Then the patter of bare feet and a voice calling to me from the head of the stairs.

"Daddy!"

I darted to the door.

"Yes?"

"My throat's dry. . . .I feel so thirsty!"

"Get back to bed, dear, and I'll bring you some milk."

I went into the pantry and found what was apparently the "breakfast milk," warmed it a little, and took it up to Molly.

She was in bed again, but the jumbled state of the clothes told of a very restless night. Although it was so bitterly cold, the eiderdown was on the floor, and the counterpane half off the bed, and Molly herself only partly covered.

I handed her the milk and straightened the bed a little, while she sat up and swallowed the liquid greedily.

"You're very flushed and feverish," I said, sitting down by her side and feeling her hot little forehead and cheeks with the back of my hand. "Do you think you've caught cold, Molly?"

"I don't know, Daddy. . . .But it is hot!"

She searched with her feet for cold spots under the bedclothes.

"You mustn't toss the eiderdown off," I said. "Can't you get to sleep, dear?"

"No-o-o!. . . ." she murmured, restlessly.

I placed a cool hand on her forehead again.

"Is that better?"

"Yes, Daddy!. . . .Ever so much!"

She became quieter and gently pulled my other hand into the bed and commenced cuddling it. For half an hour or more I stayed with her until she fell into a fitful sleep. Then I crept downstairs to the fire and warmed my frozen limbs and feet.

That bedroom scene was the first in a long and agonizing series which lasted for over a week.

The *locum tenens* to our old family doctor fought back the menace, first of rheumatic fever and then of

pneumonia. For days, it was touch and go which of the dread diseases she might contract, but she had a strong constitution—thank God!—and both Nanny and Gran'pa sank their grievances in a common service to their idol. Nothing was too much trouble for them. Nanny was just her own sweet, motherly self! But Gran'pa rose to heights of such unselfish devotion as I had never imagined. He spent practically the whole day and half of each night in her bedroom—watching her when she was asleep, and reading to her and playing games with her when she was awake.

"My God, George!" he said, "I don't think I shall ever be able to forgive myself."

His spirit of penitence and humility bordered on the pathetic. By some miracle, he had escaped Heaven knew what complications himself and he seemed determined to devote his remaining strength to succoring Molly in her dire hour of need. Gone was all his obstinacy, his freakishness. In that week of torment he had grown to years of discretion and achieved a mental stability far beyond my wildest hopes. Behind him, he had some seventy to eighty years' experience of human nature, and he brought it all to bear on Molly's particular temperament, with a wisdom which astonished even the doctor in attendance.

"The most wonderful old man I've ever seen!" he observed.

I did not mention the gland business, as I thought Gran'pa might be offended.

"He's certainly very tough!" I answered.

"But his sympathy and understanding! Remarkable!. . .Old people are usually so narrow-minded and crotchety. . . .so selfish."

"Ah! He's the exception!" I said with enthusiasm.

"What's his age?"

"Ninety-six next week."

"You don't say so! Most *astounding!*"

"You've only seen him at his quietest, doctor."

I hesitated a moment; and then family pride carried me away a little.

"Normally," I said, "he is all energy and go. He could eat, drink and smoke me under the table any day; and as a companion for Molly he's—unapproachable. Motor-scooting, tree-climbing, running and jumping. . . . That big walnut tree down the garden is one of his favorite spots He and Molly have a sort of seat, made of twisted boughs. He's often up there reading. A wonderful climber!"

"Impossible at his age!"

"You must drop in some day and see for yourself."

"Can you give any reason for it?" he asked.

Naturally, I could have given one—but I didn't. . . .

"I suppose," I said, "that it is just the result of good, clean living and a strong constitution. He's never had a day's illness in his life—except for a slight operation he once underwent. He's also an American, born and bred. I think that may account for a lot. . . ."

"H'm!. . . . Very interesting man! Telling me this morning all about Abraham Lincoln's election as President and how it was the culmination of the long political struggle between the North and the South over the question of slavery. Your great-grandfather was a young man of about your age at that time. . . .Remarkable memory for details!" mused the doctor, jerkily, as if he had a preserved specimen of Gran'pa before him in a bottle of spirit. "Got a fine head, too. . . .And there's character in his face. . . .I should say

he's a man who is not easily turned from anything he's set his mind to."

"He's the very devil," I admitted, "once he gets an idea into his head."

"It's men like that who make for progress, you know. . . ."

"Undoubtedly, doctor! I believe that in a few years' time grandfather's name will be a household word."

"In a few years' time!. . . ." he exclaimed. "But surely at his age—ninety-six. . . ."

"Oh, he's good for another thirty or forty years yet!"

The doctor looked at me with a trace of alarm in his eyes; then he said rather abruptly:

"Well, I must be going, Mr. Barnett."

The moment he had left the house, Gran'pa entered the room. He seemed very irritable.

"You must pardon me, George," he said, "but I couldn't help overhearing some of that conversation. . . . I don't think it was very nice of you to hold me up to ridicule."

"I had no such intention," I replied. "It was more from a feeling of justifiable pride in your abilities than anything else."

"H'm!. . . . Well, it's my own fault, perhaps. . . . I've been intoxicated with this sudden flow of new energy. It went to my head, so to speak. My brain was overstimulated. I felt very much like a man who has come out of the darkness into a blaze of light. I hadn't grown used to the change .. . .Then came this terrible shock. I thought that Molly was going to die. . . ." (Although she had practically recovered, the word sent the blood rushing inwards and I involuntarily shivered.) "But, thank God, she was spared. . . . It's been one

awful nightmare of fear and if anything had happened to her, I should have killed myself; but the ordeal seems to have steadied me. Something's gone snap in here"—he tapped his forehead—"and I'm whole again!"

I kept silent, amazed at the sudden revelation of sanity.

Said Gran'pa: "As soon as Molly is well again I intend starting life afresh. I have a great deal of experience behind me, valuable first-hand knowledge of things and persons. I don't want to quote the old tag about an ounce of experience, but it's certainly true. It will give me a big pull over the younger generation—although I shall necessarily want their help. I shall not be handicapped like most men of my age, or even twenty years younger. And, thank Heaven, I have plenty of self-confidence."

He strode down the room, glanced out of the window at a burst of winter sunshine, and then came back to the hearth-rug, from which he had delivered his confession.

Taking hold of my arm, he added, very quietly:

"Please remember, George, that in future I'm a reasonable human being."

"I believe you," I answered. "In the last few days you have certainly changed for the better. . . ."

That brief conversation gave me an insight into Gran'pa's new character—or was it his old one emerging butterfly-like from the chrysalis of age? He had become a man with a serious purpose in life; though he would not reveal exactly what that purpose was.

Events moved swiftly. A short time after Molly's complete recovery, Gran'pa visited the barber, and returned with a clean-shaven face and shorter locks!

The effect was bewildering, but very impressive. I

saw for the first time the square-cut jaw and the firm mouth which had been hidden beneath the tangle of white beard and moustache. His cheeks were still sunken and his neck was scraggy; but—"They'll fill out in time, George!" he said.

The next day he dyed his hair a dark brown—and knocked his apparent age down to not a day more than fifty.

A week later he had discarded his old-fashioned swallow-tailed coat and wide-legged trousers for a smartly-cut gray lounge suit of the latest style. Another five or ten years seemed to have gone in a flash!

He began gradually acclimatizing himself to cold baths in the mornings. The bath-room echoed with the sounds of his blowings and splashings and singings. . . .

An elastic "exerciser" appeared as if by magic on his bedroom door, and a pair of dumb-bells sprang into being on the window-sill.

At meal times he poured on his food large quantities of olive oil—and fried brown bread in it, for what he called his "eleven o'clock snack."

He even made a daily visit to the local beauty parlor, where his wrinkles were smoothed and steamed and massaged. Under this and the olive oil treatment his face and neck grew rounder and firmer.

And so, by these many painstaking efforts, did Gran'pa descend the barren mountain-side of age and come into the wide and fertile valley of Youth. The progress he made was very slow, but it was very, very sure. Every week he had a full and side-face photograph taken, and every week we compared it with the previous records of rejuvenation. It was then that one could see the gradual birth of that new man which he was making of himself.

This gallery of portraits was an example of how carefully and scientifically gran'pa was proceeding, and, unsatisfied with mere externals, he also paid periodic visits to Dr. Croft, who measured the strength of his heart-beat—and also recorded it on paper in the form of a zigzag graph.

"We're getting along, George!" he said. "I shall soon have you beaten, my boy. I'm going backwards and you're going forwards! When shall we meet, eh?"

"I wouldn't like to prophesy anything where you're concerned."

He put his hand on my shoulder and laughed from the sheer joy of living.

"This time last year. . . ." he said musingly, "was I really that—doddering old fool in the chair?"

"You were certainly old, and you were certainly in that chair—most of your time," I answered good-humoredly. (I was beginning to like him immensely!)

"What an escape!. . . .What a miracle!. . . .And this time next year? . . . ."

"Aren't you *ever* going to tell me of this project of yours?" I pleaded, appropriately.

"Very soon, George! Next week I'm going down to Brooklands."

"You intend trying or buying a motor car—or aeroplane?" I gasped.

"A mere detail! But I refuse to be pumped. You'll hear everything in good time, George. . . ."

So I still had to wait impatiently for the Day of Revelation!

CHAPTER VII

MR. STRINGER COMES TO BREAKFAST

IT was easy to see that Gran'pa's reference to Brooklands could mean one of only two things—motoring or aeroplaning. But I never expected what actually followed.

The old man—or should I say the young one?—came home one evening in a state of feverish excitement.

"I've been flying, George!" he announced buoyantly.

"Skylarking?" I asked, "or really leaving the earth for the air?"

"Flying!" he emphasized, flapping his hands and arms about. "This afternoon I went to Bournemouth and back. . . .for a little trial spin."

"A trial spin?" I echoed, wondering what bigger project he had in view.

He nodded and drew in a great breath.

It was spring, and the windows were open, and the ir was like wine. Gran'pa seemed to be half intoxicated.

"By the Lord Harry!" he exclaimed. "It's the greatest thing I've done. We left Brooklands at two sharp and were back at a quarter to five—with two loops and a nose-dive *en route*. I've fixed up another jaunt on Sunday—with you and Molly. And next week I'm popping over to Rome and back. If the journey's satisfactory, I intend buying the machine."

"Doing what?" I gasped.

His eyes twinkled as he watched Molly and me, and with an exaggerated nonchalance, he lit his pipe and sat

down on the edge of the dining-room table—the very embodiment of a vigorous, middle-aged man, at least fifty years younger than himself. . . .

"I've a specification here, somewhere," he said, fumbling in his breast pocket, and presently drawing out a scrap of paper. "Vickers-Vimy Rolls-Royce. The most reliable combination in the world, George, ...Just read that through and tell me what you think of it."

I read through a specification which might have been Yiddish, so little did it enlighten me.

"It looks as if it will cost a fortune," I observed.

"Not at all! In fact, I'm getting three brand new ones."

I tried to pass some comment on this amazing man's new outbreak, but could not. I was literally tongue-tied. It was the most stupendous exhibition of idiocy I had ever encountered. One might conceivably buy three motor cars; but, three aeroplanes. . . .!

"What in heaven's name do you intend doing with them?" I managed to say at last. "Is it to be the nucleus of a new Air Force?"

"No! Just a little private venture—for the public good!"

"D'you mean there's a machine for each of us?" I asked, with a feeble attempt at humor.

"If you like to put it that way, George. . . ."

It was very evident that he had some tremendous scheme afoot, and the tantalizing air of secrecy he maintained rather annoyed me.

"Why be so secretive?" I asked. "Surely you can tell us all exactly what you intend doing."

He blew out a cloud of smoke and sat there as unruffled as a sphinx.

"Ever thought of foreign travel?" he queried, mildly.

"I have. We all have! But certainly not by aeroplane."

"Ah! You're still very conservative, George. You should move with the times. You don't think that, now I've got my youth back, I'm going to be content with fussy old steamers and railway trains, do you? I want to fly—*soar!*—get above the world and look down on it. Besides," he added slyly, "there aren't any trains where I'm going. . . ."

I knew that he wanted me to fire a volley of questions at him. But I didn't! I sat and waited.

So did Gran'pa.

Presently he said:

"You've read Robert Louis Stevenson, George?"

"I have!"

"D'you like treasure hunting yarns?"

"I do!"

"But you don't think there's much scope for that sort of thing nowadays?"

"I don't think there ever was—except in books," I answered, peevishly.

"You're a frightful sceptic, George. It's through living in London all your life. A dull, blasé place! . . . . Lot of noise and bustle—and talk—but nothing ever *happens!*"

He puffed away at his pipe for a few moments, and then resumed, with the air of some politician portraying a world which needs reforming: "All that's got to be changed. Humanity in the mass moves very slowly. If you want things done, you must rely on the individual who can elbow his way out of the rut." He gazed at me with inspiration in his eyes.

"George," he said quietly. "I believe I'm one of those individuals. Already, I'm the first man to travel backwards through life. There was that convict they experimented on in America, of course, but one never heard any more of him. Possibly he died. In any case he was only sixty or so. *I* was ninety-five. . . ."

"Was. . . .?" I murmured.

He chuckled.

"How old am I now?" He stood up and smote his chest. "How old do I look and feel?"

"About forty-five, I should say."

"Not a day older! Not a day. . . .Well, that's the first step away from the rut. Then there's this—the greatest of all. Treasure hunting in aeroplanes!"

"Where? And *what?*" I asked, involuntarily—knowing full well that he was gloating over my curiosity.

He waited awhile before he continued.

Then he suddenly disclosed his scheme in all its fascinating glory. It staggered me—at first by its utter absurdity; then by its alarming possibility; and, finally, by its sheer plausibility. It was gigantic, gruesome, grotesque; and yet, to hear Gran'pa talk, it was so transparently simple that it made me wonder why no one had thought of it before.

"Ever since these new glands have been in full working order," he said, "I can't help feeling that others ought to be given an opportunity of regaining their youth. There must be hundreds of old men like myself who are still looking backwards in the way I used to: Ah! if only I had my life to live over again! It's the saddest, the most wistful cry in the world, George—that 'might-have-been!' You can't appreciate it at your age, with your eyes on the future. But picture yourself when you are seventy—seventy-five—eighty—

always gazing backwards. There's no tragedy in life until you're old—and then it's the eternal tragedy of that might-have-been! I've lived through it all. I know. . . . .The time I must have spent just sitting. . . .and thinking. . . .Always the same refrain. Might have been!. . . .Might have been!. . . ."

His gaze was directed towards the fire now—that strange picture-factory of the past and the future—and I could see that he was very deeply moved.

"When I spoke of treasure hunting just now you probably thought of hidden chests of jewels and coins, of tattered and torn scraps of paper with complicated directions and cabalistic signs written on them—all that paraphernalia of fictitious adventure. . . .As if gold were the most important thing in life!"

"It's handy at times," I commented.

"Would my fortune be of any value to me if I were dead?"

"No!. . . .I believe that it serves no useful purpose in the next world."

He chuckled to himself. "So you come to the basic fact that the greatest 'treasure' I've found so far has been. . . ."

"By Jove!" I exclaimed. "You mean *Glands!*"

"I do! I'm going gland-hunting!"

He allowed time for the announcement to penetrate into my startled brain.

". . . .Gorillas?" I asked, at last.

"Yes. . . .!"

"It's absurd! You couldn't get enough of them to do any good. You might shoot half-a-dozen in a whole year, and. . . ."

"Who said 'shoot'? I want them *alive,* man, not dead!"

"Have you ever read anything about gorillas?" I asked, quietly.

"A great deal during the last few weeks. They're easily the most ferocious and terrifying beasts in the world. Du Chaillu says that the gorilla is the monarch of the African forest—that no other animal on earth dare face it when it is enraged. Practically every game hunter of any standing agrees on this point. Even a man armed with a modern gun runs grave risks in an encounter with a gorilla. If the bullet misses. . . ." Gran'pa shrugged his shoulders.

"And yet you stand there," I said, "and tell me that you intend *capturing* them!"

"That's the whole charm of the thing. We have to devise some method, George, of not only getting them in large quantities, but of getting them alive and well. Every gorilla killed will represent the death sentence of some human being—the loss of a new lease of life. That's a terrible thought, George. It means a very great responsibility. . . ."

"Nonsense! People have been dying from old age ever since the world began."

"So they have from lock-jaw, and consumption, and malaria, and a thousand other complaints."

"That's no comparison. Death from old age is inevitable and. . . ."

"Is it? What about me?"

"But sooner or later. . . ." I said bluntly.

"Yes! I expect I shall. . . .sooner or later. But the chief thing is that I haven't yet. I *might* have died of diphtheria nearly fifty years ago; but medical science saved me. I might have died of malaria once—but for quinine. Everyone who has reached my age—or only half of it—has probably been saved at least once in his

life. But it's only a probability, George. In the majority of cases one cannot tell for certain. With these glands, however, it is different. I know that I've been rescued from death as surely as when a life buoy is thrown to a drowning man. When the liner sinks in mid-ocean it's the number of floatable commodities that determine the number of the saved. A man who destroyed a life buoy at such a moment would be guilty of murder. And that's precisely the attitude we must adopt towards this gorilla hunt. A gorilla shot dead in the heart of Africa is a man murdered somewhere at home. We *must* catch them alive. . . ."

"I suppose it's possible," I said. "Otherwise, how did they get our friend Alfred—and the one in the Zoo?"

"Naturally it's been done before, but not on a big enough scale. I very much doubt if more than fifty or sixty of them have been captured alive during the last century. That's much too slow for us. We shall want them. . . .in hundreds a month, at least. . . ."

"Sort of round them up, like rebels," I suggested.

"Flippantly put," he answered, dryly, "but substantially correct."

The insight required for such a gigantic undertaking was so utterly beyond me that I simply could not treat the matter seriously.

"I don't quite understand the aeroplane part," I said. "Do you intend flying over the jungle and lassoing them—or, what?"

"Don't be feeble, George. The aeroplanes are merely for *getting* there. Where it took weeks for other men to travel a hundred miles through the African jungle, we shall manage it in as many hours. We could leave Gaboon at eight in the morning, say. . . ."

"Where on earth is Gaboon?"

He treated the interruption—which was actually inspired by a genuine thirst for knowledge—with contempt.

"You'll find it on any map of Equatorial Africa," he answered quietly. "As I was saying, we could leave there at eight in the morning and be in the heart of the gorilla country by ten o'clock at the latest. I intend making Gaboon the headquarters."

It is extraordinary that I was not in the least astounded at the easy and casual way in which Gran'pa was unfolding his plan of campaign. My initial amazement once over, it seemed the most natural thing in the world for a man to take gorilla-hunting aeroplane trips in Africa. It was as if Gran'pa had merely said: "We'll make New York our headquarters and motor over to West Point, Atlantic City and other spots of interest."

For over two hours he sat there talking, joking, speculating; and every query I raised was demolished swiftly and easily. There was little doubt whatever that he had studied the matter very thoroughly. He knew the country, the climate, the facilities for obtaining guides, the habits and haunts of the gorillas, and even their "language."

When I showed symptoms of unbelief at this last item of knowledge, he was evidently pleased with himself.

"I've been to Garner's works for that," he said. "You must remember Garner. He was the explorer who for nearly four months lived in a wire cage in one of the African forests. He says that both the chimpanzee and the gorilla have a definite language of twenty words or more. They have vocal expressions for 'food,' 'good'—in a sort of 'Thank-you!' sense—

'discomfort,' 'drink,' 'illness,' and even 'death.' Take this for instance."

Gran'pa threw back his head, drew in his breath and imitated a weird animal cry, as near as possible to the exclamation:

"*Ugh—h—h.* . . ." (trailing off in a long drawn aspirate sound).

"That," he explained, "means 'food.'"

He made a few more noises, preceded by facial contortions and deep breathing exercises—which seemed to be the necessary preliminary to this new ape language.

"There's a sound, too," he explained, "by means of which they call one another. It goes like this: "?.. ?..? !" (My powers of representation fail me.)

"That may come in quite handy, George. Don't you think so?"

"Very!" I said. "If you have it right."

"I've tried it!" he laughed.

"On a live ape, d'you mean? When?"

"At the Zoo!"

"But. . . ."

"I tried it on the chimpanzee—and it worked! At first, he looked as if he knew quite well what it meant, but wouldn't bother to reply. So I repeated it twice! He hesitated. Then he got up, came over to me and commenced tugging at my sleeve and making peculiar little noises in the back of his throat. Most astonishing thing I've ever seen, George. The keeper—quite an intelligent fellow—was flabbergasted. Said he'd never seen anything like it before."

"You mean you actually went in the cage?"

"Yes!. . . .I also gave the 'alarm' signal—and what do you think the brute did!"

"Heaven above knows!"

" Rushed into the corner of the cage and hid himself under the straw. . . ."

I was impressed. Whatever other little weaknesses Gran'pa had, he never lied, and never exaggerated.

Already, I was beginning to feel sorry for these Monarchs of the African Forests. What chance had the poor wretches against a man like this, with all the resources of civilization behind him? And yet. . . .

" Granting all these possibilities," I said. " Supposing we do get to Gaboon with our aeroplanes and our monkey-language system in full working order. And supposing we do actually capture a few hundred of the brutes alive. What then? You can't bring them back to headquarters by aeroplane. . . ."

" Why not? "

" Oh. . . .I don't know! It sounds so utterly damned silly."

" Not half so silly and impossible as some of the everyday exploits in the war. It's child play compared with 'planing through a tornado of bursting shells, or fighting battles a couple of miles up."

" I suppose it is. . . . ."

Every argument I produced as to the unreasonableness of his schemes was squashed in an instant.

" Well," I said, at last. " We have our apes—by the hundred. What then? It's their glands you want; the brutes themselves, as far as you're concerned, are merely perambulating depositories for the Elixir of Life. You keep them alive simply to keep their glands alive. A dead gland is useless, and. . . ."

" Wait a moment, young man! Ever heard of cold storage? "

" It's the curse of the modern mutton trade," I observed.

"Possibly! Many scientists, however, consider it possible to keep the thyroid gland active for at least three or four days after its removal—if the thing is packed in ice. That'll help a great deal. I intend shipping the apes to Walfisch Bay, and then taking the glands by 'plane to a convenient spot in the Kalahari Desert—one of the healthiest places in the world. It is there that we shall establish the great Hospital for the Rejuvenation of the Aged."

I grew reckless in my concessions to the plausibility of the scheme.

"So far so good," I said. "We've accomplished even this. But what about the patients? How many old men do you seriously think are going to risk their lives by setting out on such an insane quest for youth? There aren't a dozen men in England to-day who'd do anything half as wild—especially old men of seventy- or eighty. All they want then is peace—peace in which to end their days. That's the great cry of the aged. And therein lies the final weakness of the whole thing, Gran'pa. The idea is good, the plot is excellent, the adventure thrilling, the. . . ."

"Don't you worry, George!" he cried. "That's where, as a last resource, the Press Campaign comes in. If necessary, I shall boom this rejuvenescence of mine as nothing on earth has ever been boomed before. I am willing to be photographed, interviewed, filmed, and leading-articled until we're simply swamped with applications. You don't understand human nature. The will to live comes before everything. If there is no response from Englishmen I shall appeal to America, although I would rather not experiment on my own countrymen until I've gained more practical knowledge."

So the last stronghold of my long line of objections

was razed to the ground, and the discussion of this momentous fight against death drew to a close. Was there ever a madder and more useless scheme than this wretched monkey hunting for the aged? Like most young men of this generation, I had very little respect for mere age. Everywhere one turned one saw old men in charge of the world—men of fifty and upwards. They monopolized all the best positions in the Government, in business, in literature, in law, on town councils, in the Civil Service, and in the army. They kept out the young and ambitious by sneering at their inexperience and hot-headedness; they scoffed at their love affairs; they even tried to arrange their marriages; and—most iniquitous of all—they arranged wars in which the young fought and died through the folly and greed of their forebears.

If only one could reduce the life span instead of lengthening it—bring it down to fifty, say! If only one could speed up life by removing the brake of the ancient, the doddering and the incapable, who hung on to their jobs to the eternal detriment of the young! If only one could make life fuller and quicker—instead of emptier and slower. . . .

Was it right for me to sacrifice the men of my own generation in this manner? Was it dignified? Was it noble?

I thought the matter out carefully. And in the end I came to the conclusion that it simply did not matter. After all, the most Gran'pa and I could hope to do was to save a few hundred of the old criminals. If we caught all the gorillas in the whole of Africa, it would be no more than a mere drop in the ocean. At the Continental spas alone what does one see? The middle-aged, the old and ancient, crawling about in useless thousands. . . .

All the monkeys in the world couldn't save more than a tenth per cent. of them.

And yet the thing might grow. There were other animals, perhaps, which might contribute. Already, the goat provided valuable thyroid extracts. Why not still others? Suppose the system was extended, and thousands of animals were bred solely for their glandular possibilities! In the course of a lifetime one man probably consumes dozens of sheep, oxen and pigs, and yet in some mysterious way arrangements have been made for a constant supply of these beasts. Why then should provision not be made for, say, a couple of pairs of glands per life. If man wants a commodity he usually gets it—sooner or later. He wanted tame dog, and he got it. To-day, there must be millions of them on the earth. Science might be clever enough some day to breed special gland-bearing animals, whose prime function would be the salvation of the aged. It might take generations or centuries to accomplish the miracle, but ultimately. . . .

The thought staggered me—and I returned to my monkeys. If *we* didn't start the business someone else would.

And so, at last, I gave way.

"To blazes with the Civil Service. . . ." I thought. "Why should I moulder in an office when there are so many more interesting places in the world?"

I found a map of Africa and discovered Gaboon and its principal port of Libreville. It might have looked an outlandish spot, but at any rate it looked exciting. I liked the shape of the river mouth; the country to the east; the proximity of the Equator, which ran only a few miles to the south; and the way the great blue sea spread out to the west.

I found Walfisch Bay and the Kalahari. And then I looked at the tiny patch of dirt which we call England. I thought of the tedious train journey from north to south of this island, and I measured the distance on the same scale map of Africa. As I did so the immensity of our task suddenly smote me in all its glory. It was uncanny to think that all those thousands of miles away lay the great African jungles; that at this precise moment, while I was peacefully smoking my pipe in Richmond, there was another land in which the gorilla and the chimpanzee roamed and fought and died; and that presently we should commence invading their fastnesses and enlisting their services in aid of the aged and decrepit of our own race.

I tried to picture the place—the tall trees, the ghostly undergrowth, the sodden marshes, the hot, dripping climate, the wicked and cunning little eyes which would watch us from the tree tops and the bushes as we went on our errand of mercy. I tried to visualize native villages and long, meandering rivers infested with crocodiles and hippopotami. I feebly attempted to imagine what a herd of wild elephants looked like. Did the porcupine erect its quills when angry and the lion slink away at the sight and smell of you? What were the prevalent diseases in this new land of hope and glory? Would the natives welcome us, or pursue and torture and devour us? How much cheap jewelry and beads should we require to bribe them to help us? Did they bother about such things now, or had they moved with the times and installed picture palaces and gramophones in their chief villages?

Even when I retired to bed that night I still went on speculating. My poor, civilized brain was troubled with vague, terrorizing dreams, manufactured no doubt from

all I had ever read and heard of the grotesque, the hideous and the cruel. I was pursued by cannibals, bitten by mosquitoes, mauled by tigers, nibbled by swarms of ants, and trampled on by wild elephants. But I never saw a single gorilla! Monkeys I saw galore—little black-faced chattering creatures, hanging by their tails from branches high overhead; also a horrid dog-faced baboon pursuing Gran'pa (bearded and old and withered again!) down a narrow pathway which led to the sea. But not a single gorilla! It was very astonishing. Was it an omen, I wondered?

I got up in the morning feeling that I knew Africa through and through. But when I looked out of the bedroom window the illusion was dispelled immediately. I saw the garden in all its spring glory—the daffodils and tulips, the plum blossoms, the green carpet of the lawn sprinkled with white daisies, and then—Gran'pa, walking and talking very earnestly in the sunshine with a little, ferocious-looking man in a coat with a fur collar.

I watched them curiously, until they disappeared round the bend of the path, and then I commenced dressing.

When I arrived downstairs Gran'pa and his companion were in the dining-room chattering away like a couple of sparrows.

"Ah, George!" cried Gran'pa. "I quite forgot to tell you about Mr. Stringer. He's come down from Scotland by the night train. I wrote and asked him to make straight for Airesdale Avenue the moment he arrived, and have breakfast with us. I wanted you to see him before you went to town this morning. We're spending the day at the Zoo, and then going on to Bristol this evening to see Boswell's Menagerie there."

I extended my hand towards Mr. Stringer, wondering what on earth it was all about, and, as his fingers closed on mine and our eyes met, a peculiar thrill seemed to travel up my arm and backbone, culminating in a sudden tremor in the base of my skull. When he dropped my hand, however, he still kept his eyes fixed on me for a second or two. Never in all my life had I felt such a burning, penetrating gaze. It reached out like a ray of light, half-dazzled me, and probed into every nook and corner of my brain.

Suddenly, that unearthly sensation of being a frozen microbe under a microscope was gone again, and I felt the blood come pumping back into my ears—*thud! . . . . thud! . . . .*

"*You* noticed it, George?" cried Gran'pa.

"I. . . .er. . . .certainly. . . .noticed something," I stammered.

"Good! Mr. Stringer possesses one of the least known but most potent forces in nature. He calls himself a hypnotist and mental healer, but I prefer the older term, Animal Magnetism. I have great hopes of Mr. Stringer—when we reach Africa. . . ."

CHAPTER VIII

WE SET OUT FOR BRISTOL

I LOOKED at this man Stringer more closely, and was surprised to find that he had now assumed a more normal and human appearance. It was as if our initial handshake had liberated some hidden fountain of fiendishness in him, and now that it was all over we were quite good friends again.

As I studied him I couldn't help feeling that I had seen his face before. And then I suddenly saw the reason of it. He had that peculiar, much married, walrus-moustached appearance of Bairnsfather's "Old Bill." He was a rather short, thick-set man, too, and wore the "Old Bill" expression of eternal, philosophical contentment. Sitting there in the arm-chair, with one stumpy leg crossed over the other, he might easily have been this terrible "Fragment of the Great War" come to life. But the moment he spoke, the similarity vanished. His moustache bristled until it stood out nearly at right angles, his eyes flamed with that hidden fire, and his whole attitude became one of extreme animation. He seemed to *compel* the listener's attention. And yet, the very second he ceased speaking, the fire died down, the moustache subsided and drooped, his body became listless. Once more, he was poor "Old Bill"—harmless, inoffensive, and soothing to the senses. It was certainly an extraordinary accomplishment and had no doubt taken years to acquire; but I failed to see exactly what all this had to do with hunting apes in Africa.

Gran'pa watched these signs of facial birth and decay with enthusiastic approval.

"D'you see the idea, George?" he asked.

"I'm bothered if I do."

"It's as old as the hills—and yet it's new."

I racked my brains for an explanation, but found none.

"The only thing I can think of," I said at last, "is that you intend hypnotically suggesting to the aged that they should hand themselves over body and soul to the pioneers of this new Rejuvenation Cult."

"By Jove!" he laughed. "That's not bad, Stringer! Eh?"

"Old Bill" bristled—and then grinned expansively. This expression of gentle mirth looked very quaint—the most anti-Old Billish thing one could imagine. It was uncanny.

"Why not enlighten me?" I asked, somewhat testily.

"I'd rather not—just at present," answered Gran'pa. "You know how I hate the thought of failure, George. There's a possibility that this may end in failure. . . . I hope not, because, if it succeeds, it will be the keystone of the whole system. Still, I'll tell you what we'll do. You shall come down to Bristol with us this evening and see how the theory works."

Beyond this I could not get. Gran'pa was adamant, and Stringer was sphinx-like. To see them, one would have thought that I was a mere outsider and that they had been life-long friends. I was tired, however, of showing my incessant curiosity in Gran'pa's plans, and so I acquiesced.

"Very well," I said. "I'll come!"

Gran'pa nodded.

"At the same time, George," he remarked, "I think that you might hand in your resignation at the office to-day. We're going to be very busy during the next few weeks. Now that Mr. Stringer has arrived, there is no time to be lost."

I said very little more after that. I ate my breakfast quickly, explained to Nanny that we should be away for a day or two, packed my bag, came downstairs again, arranged to meet Gran'pa and Stringer in town at about five o'clock, kissed Molly "Goodbye," and set out to catch a train half-an-hour or so later than usual.

After the startling revelations of the previous evening, the horrible dreams of the night, and the strange hypnotic shock of the early morning I felt excited and desperate. Events had moved so swiftly that I could hardly believe that less than twenty-four hours previously I had not even heard of Gaboon, I had known next to nothing of gorillas (beyond our old friend Alfred), and I certainly hadn't the remotest idea of ever chasing and capturing them.

Naturally, I had realized that I should soon shake the dust of the Government offices from my eager feet. I had known, too, that, with a man like Gran'pa in the family, life could not much longer run in the old, accustomed rut. But I had not expected the climax to come so suddenly.

It was a glorious spring morning, and as I left the house I felt myself possessed of a new body and mind.

I came through the town like a man in a dream—everything looked so bright and fresh and clean—so different!

At "The King's Head" Hotel I paused. A 'bus was coming over the bridge, all aglow with yellow

sunlight, and I saw a girl in a bright blue jumper standing on the pavement there, looking upstream. Another who passed me had gold in her hair, and another had the whitest teeth I've ever seen.

"Away with the office!" I thought. "Why should I bother myself?"

The river called me. I had no deep desire to go on it, but I wanted very much to walk by it, and hear its merry gurgle and chatter. Why should I catch the next train?

I crossed over to the tobacconist's shop at the corner, replenished my pouch, and left my suit-case with him for awhile. Then I went down the steps and on the riverside, where the boatmen were busy cleaning and painting their punts and skiffs. Everywhere was warm sunlight, and the smell of fresh air, and the pleasant sound of running water.

As I continued my way downstream something within me sang for joy. It was a sort of *requiem.* Dead was the stodgy, stuffy old office! Dead the daily train journey! Dead the scramble for mid-day lunch in the dust of the city! Dead, at last, was the unending sameness of every to-morrow. . . .

I smoked like fury! By the time I reached the Old Deer Park, I found myself knocking out my pipe and filling and lighting it again. Onwards I went, until I reached and entered Kew Gardens. In there, I watched the wild ducks disporting themselves on the pond, and began wondering if any of them came from Africa.

I even searched for and found trees which grew on the Dark Continent. . . .

How green and sweet the grass was! (Better than the carpet in the office.) I sat down on it and then

turned over and lay with my chin resting in cupped hands. Through half-closed eyes, I studied the largest of the islands in the pond and speculated as to whether anyone—other than the unappreciative officials—had ever ventured into its jungle-like foliage.

A little black duck came out from one of the miniature bays in the island, dived, and reappeared a dozen yards further out. It dived again; and I pictured it beneath the green water, searching for fat worms in the mud at the bottom.

"The open-air and—freedom!" I thought. "How good it is to be alive!"

Another pipe of tobacco gone!

When I had refilled it, I got up and crossed over to one of the drinking fountains and swallowed a great draught of ice cold water. (The water is wonderful at Kew! So clear and fresh and cold!)

I visited the green-houses and hot-houses. Still more visions of Africa. . . . The heat was a little stifling, perhaps; but, who cared?

I spent over a quarter of an hour in the orchid house—until the attendants apparently grew suspicious and the perfume half intoxicated me.

Then, the open air again and still another pipe!

It was now eleven o'clock and the sun shone from a cloudless blue sky—the same old sun that I should see in Gaboon and through the tree tops of the African forests. . . . (A strange but comforting thought, that—how the dear old sun follows its children into the uttermost parts of the earth. Thank Heaven gorillas didn't live at the North Pole! I hated cold.)

Homewards I came at last. Down the gravel pathways and across smooth green lawns—(No "*Keep off the Grass*" notices in Kew Gardens!)—and be-

tween bushes laden with white, glistening blossoms, and by the side of tulip and hyacinth beds. And, everywhere, was the song of birds. . . .

I tried, in a moment of voluntarily-imposed melancholy, to think of the office and clerkdom. But I couldn't grip or visualize it. And yet Africa seemed extraordinarily near and real.

Behind some bushes on the left, I caught a glimpse of the African Crane—" Freddy," as Molly called him. He came striding along in that haughty and lady-like way of his—an ash-gray symbol of the true poetry of motion. I wondered if I should ever see his brothers and sisters in their native habitat.

I strolled towards him, but he moved gracefully and disdainfully away. Probably, he despised me. What did I, a wretched civil servant, know of his life and ambitions? What right had I to pay a penny to come and gaze at him as if he was some curio in a museum?

I agreed with him. When I reached Africa it was I who would be a curiosity—I who would be an object of scrutiny and, possibly, amusement. I recalled those wicked and cunning little monkey-eyes in my dreams of the previous night, and I couldn't help laughing. It seemed so ludicrous to think that presently the measure of my importance in a Government office would be turned topsy-turvy and have to adjust itself to the ape standard of the African jungle. What would be the value of my civilized brain when pitted against their natural cunning and cruelty and physical strength? Would they be impressed by the position I took in that infernal entrance examination? Which would win—brains or beef?

As I came out of the Gardens into the main road I

heard the sound of an aeroplane engine, looked up, and saw the black speck of machinery travelling slowly up river. The pavements, the houses, the busses and motor cars, and the people around me took on an air of unreality. In an instant I was in Gaboon, setting out to fetch our daily cargo of live gorillas.

"Whoa—guv'nor!" cried a voice.

I lowered my gaze just in time to avert a collision with a ladder and innumerable pots and pans, and once more the paraphernalia of modern civilization obtruded itself into my consciousness.

"Better 'phone to the office," I thought, "and let them know I'm not coming to-day. I wonder who'll have to tackle that Wilson file now? What a mess! What a conglomeration of correspondence and Board's orders! What a fuss over nothing! Why do civil servants and their overlords spend their lives in writing and talking and arguing with one another?"

I didn't bother to answer the question—it all seemed such a feeble waste of time and energy.

When I reached the station I entered a telephone box, got through to the office at last, and broke the news to one of my colleagues—a tall, thin, dyspeptic individual called Swanson—a "promotion" man who took work very seriously, in the hope of some ultimate and earthly reward for his industry and intelligence.

"Hello!" I said. "That you, Swanson? This is Barnett speaking."

"Anything the matter?" he asked. "Not ill, I hope."

"Yes! I'm taking sick leave at once. I'm sick of the work, sick of the office, sick of the Civil Service—dead beat!"

A horrified pause. Then:

"You sound very cheerful in spite of it! What's happened? Any message for the chief?"

"My love and blessings! Tell him that I'm going for a sea voyage—for the good of my soul!"

"You're joking. . . ."

"Not a bit! I'm going to Gaboon."

"*Where?*"

"Gaboon! It's a health resort on the west coast of Equatorial Africa—a favorite spot for day trips into the heart of the Gorilla Country."

Another pause. Poor old Swanson! Then:

"Are you really sending in a sick note, Barnett?"

"Dozens of 'em! I left the service at nine-thirty this morning, relinquished my prospects of promotion, sacrificed my pension at sixty! Isn't it exciting?"

"Been left some money?"

"Not a cent! I've merely found another job."

"You're pulling my leg!"

I detected a distinct note of envy in the exclamation. Even the industrious Swanson felt that he would have been better off in the business world than in the Civil Service.

"I'm an explorer!" I said. "If you're good, I shall send you some tusks and things when I get to Gaboon."

"You don't mean to say that you actually are going to Africa?"

"All the way—and then some!"

At this point the exchange butted in with the simple explanation that my time limit was up.

"Bye-bye!" I said. "I'll drop you a line. . . ."

I hung up the receiver, emerged from my box, and hurried out into the sunlight again.

So that was *that!*

When I was in my right mind again I would write to my Lords the Commissioners, and confirm my telephone message, but in my present mood I should have found it impossible to sit down and subscribe myself as their obedient servant, George Barnett. It was so palpably untrue. I was nobody's servant this morning—nobody's!

Back in the town again the whim seized me to go into the Public Library and glean a few interesting tit-bits about the gentle gorilla and its playful ways. So I consulted the librarian, borrowed Du Chaillu's "Equatorial Africa," and sat down and commenced reading.

It was an absorbing book; and on that bright, adventurous morning it gripped me more fiercely than the finest love story ever written. Parts of it made me shiver, and yet they fascinated. The description of one disastrous encounter with a gorilla ran as follows:—

> "We picked him (a native) up and I dressed his wounds as well as I could with rags torn from my clothes. When I had given him a little brandy he came to himself and was able, but with great difficulty, to speak. He said that he had met the gorilla suddenly and face to face, and that it had not attempted to escape. It was, he said, a huge male, and seemed very savage. It was in a very gloomy part of the wood, and the darkness, I suppose, made him miss. He said he took good aim, and fired when the beast was only about eight yards off. The ball merely wounded it in the side. It at once began beating its breasts, and with the greatest rage advanced upon him.
>
> "To run away was impossible. He would have

been caught in the jungle before he had gone a dozen steps.

"He stood his ground, and, as quickly as he could, reloaded his gun. Just as he raised it to fire the gorilla dashed it out of his hands, the gun going off in the fall; and then in an instant, and with a terrible roar, the animal gave him a tremendous blow with its immense open paw, frightfully lacerating the abdomen and with this single blow laying bare part of the intestines. As he sank bleeding to the ground, the monster seized the gun, and the poor hunter thought he would have his brains dashed out with it. But the gorilla seemed to have looked upon this as an enemy, and in his rage almost flattened the barrel between his strong jaws.

"This is their mode when attacked—to strike one or two blows, and then leave the victims of their rage on the ground and go off into the woods. . . ."

I was impressed. And, when I thought of Gran'pa's intention of taking these huge, muscular, six-foot brutes alive and unharmed, I was almost stupefied. It seemed impossible. Indeed, the writer of the book I was reading said that up to that time (1860) no fully grown male gorilla had ever been taken alive.

The more I pondered on the matter, the more was I struck by the dangerous novelty of our undertaking. Elephants might be shot for their tusks, tigers and leopards for their skins, bears for their fur, and hundreds of other animals for the love of the chase. But we were far superior to this form of sport. We were

going out with the express intention of getting "the goods"—these terrible monarchs of the African jungle—in all their living and ferocious glory. I had little doubt that Gran'pa had already thought out some method, but I didn't see how it could be of the slightest use unless backed by actual, practical experience—of which he had none.

I closed the book I had been reading, handed it back to the librarian, mentally shook myself, and emerged once more into the sunny streets of civilization. For the first time that day I found the sight of my fellow creatures comforting and soothing. My enthusiasm was as great as ever, but it was tinctured by a grim realization of the extreme difficulty of our task.

I could see that a gorilla in the bush was far worse than two in a menagerie. Alfred, for all his ferocity, had been no more than a pale ghost of his wild brothers in the woods. Confinement and our wretched English climate must have softened his physique, even if they hadn't softened his temper. And yet I shuddered at the thought of meeting Alfred loose, in Richmond Park, say, and having to capture him alive. *Jiujitsu* would be useless; so would lassoing, or boxing, or wrestling. The strength of even half a dozen men rolled into one would be no match for such a colossal and muscular mechanism.

I could think of no reliable method save the very one which was taboo—a steady aim, the right moment, a sudden explosion, and the deadly bullet. What could Gran'pa's plan be? I gave it up. Neither my brains (nor my glands) were equal to the solution of such a problem, and so I cast about for something of more immediate interest—and had lunch.

After that, I felt much quieter, and the African jungle temporarily receded to its proper position in suburban life.

The afternoon was still before me, but I felt too much like a truant schoolboy to venture home—Molly would have been so inquisitive and Nanny so curious. Strange it was, especially at such a time as this, that I should be afraid of two mere women; but even big game hunters are human. . . .

I went across Petersham Common and back along the river side. Then I picked up my suit-case at the tobacconist's, got a 'bus to the station and proceeded to town.

Gran'pa and Stringer met me, as arranged. They were very excited and the hypnotist was bristling with animation.

"Most interesting, George!" exclaimed Gran'pa. "But I shan't be satisfied until we've been to the menagerie at Bristol."

My brain suddenly cleared.

"I can half guess!" I said.

"Has it only just dawned on you?" he cried.

I bowed my head, ashamed of my previous dulness.

"You're going to hypnotize them!" I gasped.

Gran'pa was in excellent form and as merry as a youth of twenty. It was absurd to think that he was nearly a hundred.

"In common parlance, George, we intend putting the 'fluence' on 'em. Calling them, staring them into submission, and then suddenly *commanding* them. It's the old story of the lion-tamer and the lions, with this difference. Instead of having to deal with the lower and less intelligent order of animals, we have the great

advantage of applying the same method to brutes which are second only to men. What the politician does to the crowd, the tub-thumper to the mob, the religious revivalist to the sinner—*we* shall do to the apes. Man-mind against monkey-mind. It's *brains* that count, my boy! Brains! . . ."

"Did it work at the Zoo?" I asked.

"Partly. But what can one expect there? The poor wretches are half stupefied. There isn't a really wild, alert animal in the place. Their minds are drugged with captivity and monotony and unnatural food. A test like this is of little value until we try it under normal conditions."

We had dinner and, at Gran'pa's instigation, Stringer gave the order.

It was astounding to see the masterful way he glanced round the room, beckoned the appropriate waiter to our table and sent him rushing away again.

A few minutes later, the first course was before us —as if by magic!

Never have I had such a quick, well-served dinner, or encountered such a courteous, electrified waiter. The man's soul was not his own. It was simply a pawn in the hand of a skilful player.

"The ball no question makes of ayes or noes,
But right or left, as strikes the player, goes."

Even the God of Omar shrank into insignificance by the side of ours.

"I'm sorry for that waiter," whispered gran'pa to me. "But I'm sorrier for those gorillas. We have them like that!"

He took up a crisp roll of bread and broke it in two.

"There's a vast difference between a tame waiter and a wild African gorilla," I pointed out, thinking of some of the gruesome accounts I had been reading that morning.

"Give me the gorilla!" laughed Gran'pa. "Much more intelligent and useful. It could fetch and carry every bit as well as that man; eh, Stringer?"

Stringer nodded and went on eating.

He looked as if he had a weight on his mind. Like all great men, he seemed to hold himself a little aloof from his fellow creatures. Possibly, his soul was too busy at the switchboard of his mental machinery to notice external trifles. I pictured it dashing perspiringly up and down the corridors of his brain, pulling first this lever and then that—turning on the various currents required to subdue his weaker brethren. And yet he was not all soul. His colossal appetite dispelled any such illusion as that. He ate ravenously, quickly, and a trifle piggishly. He also kept a watchful eye on the wine bottle.

When we had finished, Gran'pa tipped the waiter twice as much as usual—conscience money!

"How do you feel?" he asked, gently.

The poor, exhausted wretch looked startled and puzzled for a moment, as if someone had suddenly probed into one of the most cherished secrets of his life.

"Like . . . that!" he gasped, dropping his hands limply to his side.

"But why did you hurry so much?" persisted Gran'pa, in an undertone.

"Dunno, sir! Couldn't help it. . . . It was like as if something had 'old of me."

"Where?"

" . . . Right down . . . inside!"

Gran'pa chuckled to himself.

"You'll feel better in the morning," he said. "Don't let it worry you. You'll be able to take it quietly again to-morrow night. . . ."

We emerged into the street and commenced walking towards Piccadilly Circus.

"*That's the stuff to give 'em!*" quoted Gran'pa. "It's very wonderful, George! The sort of thing one can't explain. Call it Animal Magnetism, Hypnotism, 'Fluence' or what you like, and you're still no nearer. It must be a *force,* as inexplicable and yet as undefinable as the ability some men have of immediately making friends with other men or even animals. The thing is, can we turn it on the gorilla? Can we call him in his own language, or entice him into the magnetic field in some other way, and then suddenly take all the wind out of his sails and render him inert and submissive?"

"I don't think you realize the kind of brute we're up against," I said. "It's the most ferocious and dangerous animal in the jungle. It is absolutely fearless, and it possesses the strength of half-a-dozen men at least. What chance will a parrot cry and a hypnotic 'glare' have against such a creature?"

"That's what we're going to find out. The gorilla has many advantages over us, but, in the end, we have *the* advantage—a human brain. To begin with, I'll guarantee that I could disguise myself so that no gorilla could tell me from one of its own kind at half-a-dozen yards away."

I forewent the obvious and flippant retort to this. I said, instead:

"Your idea is to dress up Mr. Stringer as a sort of hypnotic super-gorilla?"

"Precisely!"

Stringer was trotting along by our side as though quite oblivious of the fact that he would play such a vital part in our plans. He certainly listened to our talk, but he listened as if only out of mere politeness. He made no comment and gave no sign of emotion. Sphinx-like—Old-Bill-like—he was one of the most uncanny specimens of humanity I had met. I don't think he had spoken a dozen words during the whole evening. Was he brooding over a secret sorrow; or was he merely taciturn and unsociable?

At Piccadilly Circus, we took the Tube to Paddington Station and, about half-an-hour later, were *en route* to Bristol.

It was then that Stringer spoke.

"If you'll excuse me," he said, "I think I'll have a little nap. I'm very tired."

"Do so by all means!" answered Gran'pa.

We had the carriage to ourselves, and Stringer immediately stretched himself out on the opposite seat, placed my suit-case under his head and dropped off to sleep as easily and naturally as a child.

"Queer chap . . ." whispered Gran'pa. "But what can one expect? A man with a power like his must be abnormal."

"Yes. . . . I suppose so!"

"He simply doesn't know what fear is. He handled that gorilla and chimpanzee at the Zoo like a mother of ten managing her latest arrival. And yet he'd never seen anything bigger than a pet monkey before."

I was astonished—but refused to show it in front of Gran'pa.

"How did you discover him?" I asked.

"Advertised, and then wrote and arranged an interview. He used to be a lion-tamer. At the same time, I fixed up with those menagerie people at Bristol to allow me a few minutes intercourse with their gorilla. They have what is supposed to be one of the finest specimens in Europe; and, what is better still, it's wild. Every attempt at taming it has proved useless."

"A sort of Alfred the Second," I suggested.

"By jove!" he murmured, reminiscently. "It seems twenty or thirty years ago since . . . that affair. To tell the truth, I can't recollect much about the brute. Was it very ferocious?"

I remembered how it had torn at the bars of its cage in a mad endeavor to get at Gran'pa, and how it had nearly removed a handful of his beard.

"It is not seemly that we should speak ill of the departed," I said, "but Alfred was the most vindictive-looking and malicious-minded beast I've ever seen."

"Anyway, *I* can never repay the debt I owe him . . ." mused Gran'pa. "It's strange to think that millions of years ago we severed our connection with the apes and strode upwards into manhood; and now . . . we're returning to them again to save the aged of our race."

"It's like making brothers of our first cousins," I observed.

Our conversation trickled on for some time in this speculative vein until, at last, Gran'pa said that he would follow Stringer's example.

"It's been a very busy day," he said, with a yawn. "And I'm not as young as I used to be, George. . . ."

If ever a truth sounded like an untruth, that phrase certainly did.

He made himself comfortable in the corner of the seat and was soon asleep. On the other hand, I was more wide awake than I had been for years. The whole world seemed topsy-turvy. Who would have thought, twelve months ago, that I should ever travel in the same railway carriage as a mental magnetist and a middle-aged man of ninety-five? Who could have guessed that I, George Barnett, of His Majesty's Civil Service, would ever have the opportunity of seeking fame and monkey-glands in the jungles of Africa?

For a long time I thus ruminated on the past. And then I suddenly turned to the future.

The train had stopped. I looked out of the window.

"Bristol!" I cried. "Wake up!"

CHAPTER IX

GRAN'PA DIGS UP AN OLD ROMANCE

AS it was eleven o'clock when we reached Bristol, we immediately made for the nearest hotel, partook of a light supper, and went to bed.

"We're being called at six-thirty sharp in the morning," said Gran'pa, as we parted on the landing. "Breakfast's at a quarter-past seven, and we reach the menagerie at eight. They leave for Gloucester at ten. Night-night!"

In five minutes I was in bed, in another ten sound asleep. I dreamt a little, but not as hideously and consistently as during the previous night; and at the appointed hour next morning I arose with a feeling of exuberant expectation. To-day, I should witness the Great Prelude to Adventure. After ten years of lingering death in a Government office the resurrection had come. I was alive!

Although each of us tried to conceal the fact, we were very excited and ate far less breakfast than usual. Stringer, on whom the brunt of the situation would naturally fall, was quite abstemious. He consumed only one piece of bacon and a little toast. But he drank three cups of strong coffee—and looked much better for it. . . .

Breakfast over, we took a taxi to the huge canvas town on the outskirts of the city.

Already, at the early hour of eight o'clock, it was thronged with industrious, gesticulating citizens who were knocking pegs from out of the ground, loosening ropes, and lowering and rolling up the vast expanse

of gray-white canvas. Little columns of blue smoke ascended vertically and steadily from the caravan chimneys into the still air; there was the confused noise of many people talking and shouting; the smell of trodden orange peel, frizzling bacon, and wild beasts; the thud of horses' feet on the soft turf; and then, suddenly, the sound of a man crying out: "Go easy, damn your eyes! . . . Mind that rope, Jim!"

We wended our way through the litter and commotion and smell, until we found some responsible-looking person who conducted us to the proprietor's caravan, a travelling palace of yellow and black, with its brasswork shining in the morning sun like burnished gold. There we met the strange man who amassed wealth by the simple method of exhibiting wild animals in cages, freaks on platforms, ladies and gentlemen on galloping horses. He shook hands with us, looked curiously at Stringer for a few moments, and then led the way to an isolated cage situated in one corner of the field.

"I had it brought up here into a quiet spot where you won't be disturbed," he said.

A canvas curtain was hung over the front of the van and when this had been removed we found ourselves confronted by a sheet of plate glass, behind which were the steel bars that kept our friend the gorilla at bay.

"Consumption is the greatest danger we have to face," said the proprietor. "Next to that, we have to guard against cold. You'll notice the cage is specially made for keeping contaminated air out and the heat in—particularly during the performances and in cold weather. The atmosphere is kept moist by means of an electric heater in that pool of salt water, and the four radiators you see maintain a temperature varying

from about 60 to 90 degrees each day—which is the average variation in the jungle. Nothing is worse for the gorilla than a constant degree of heat, which one never finds under natural conditions.

"Over nursing and pampering is another danger. Given careful attention to all these details, there seems to be no reason why gorillas shouldn't live for twenty or thirty years in captivity. We've had this one over ten years, and he's as strong and healthy as the day he landed at Southampton. He's a very fine fellow and weighs two hundred and fifty pounds and measures six foot one—in his socks!"

During the whole of this instructive little speech I had been watching the brute carefully—as carefully (but not as maliciously) as he watched us—and I was astounded at the formidable and muscular immensity of his frame. Alfred seemed but a child compared with the specimen before us. One sensed the capacity for merciless cruelty and cunning behind those alert, dark gray eyes, terrific strength in the long arms, and horrible, crushing properties in the tremendous, projecting jaws. "Monarch of the Jungle" was a feeble expression for such a creature. Fiend Incarnate would have been more appropriate. When I glanced at Stringer through the corner of my eyes I half shuddered. The contrast between these two antagonists was ludicrous—as ludicrous as Charlie Chaplin *versus* Carpentier.

Gran'pa was the first of us to break the silence.

"I congratulate you, sir!" he said in quiet and dignified phraseology. "Your knowledge of the treatment of these animals in captivity should prove of very great assistance to me later. Meanwhile—is it possible to remove the plate glass?"

It was! In less than ten minutes half-a-dozen men

had taken down the great metal framework in which it was set (and clamped to the cage), and there was nothing between us and the gorilla save a row of metal bars.

We heard the beast give a deep sigh, as if it appreciated a greater sense of freedom. It raised itself on the layer of earth which covered the bottom of the cage, stretched its immense arms to their fullest extent, inflated its chest, and then came waddling across to the corner nearest to Stringer, swinging its arms to preserve its balance. Clutching at the bars with its hands, it squatted down, drew back its flap-like lips in an expression of intense hatred, and began glaring steadily and evilly at "Old Bill's" double. Call it merely imagination if you like, but I am certain that it instinctively sensed him as an enemy of its race.

For fully a minute, none of us uttered a sound. Gran'pa was holding his breath expectantly, the Menagerie Man looked on with a sort of detached interest, and Stringer was evidently battling with all the powers of his strange and uncanny nature—returning stare for stare—as immobile and silent as a statue.

Suddenly, the brute let out a terrible and blood-curdling shriek, which sent an ice cold wave down my spine. It shook at the bars of the cage, ground its teeth, and quivered with rage. Then it abruptly relaxed, dropped its arms to its side and went waddling away into the corner furthest away from Stringer. Clearly, it was already very shaken and intimidated and kept turning its head from side to side in dismay.

The Menagerie Man grunted, Stringer lowered his bristling moustache and Gran'pa took a deep breath. The moment he did this I guessed what was coming.

"?..?..? !...?..?..? !..." Gran'pa cried.

It was a peculiar, clucking, guttural sound, which

came from the back of the throat, and the second it was uttered the great ape turned its head and listened in amazement to its native call.

"?..?..?!" repeated Gran'pa, kindly but firmly.

The brute hesitated, as if still uncertain whether to respond or not.

At last it found its voice and answered—in identical tones! Gran'pa repeated the signal, at the same time whispering:

"Quick, Stringer! Over here!"

And then the miracle happened. The gorilla hurried waddlingly across to us, Gran'pa and Stringer exchanged places, and the latter looked the brute full in the face, and suddenly emitted a monosyllablic ejaculation which sounded like:

"Tchah!"

The gorilla's eyes lost their ferocity, its lips closed over the hideous teeth, its arms and body grew limp, and a plaintive whine escaped it, like a human cry of distress.

The next moment Stringer the Fearless, had extended a hand into the cage and gently pressed the gorilla's head to the ground!

If ever an animal knew its master, that poor subjugated brute in the cage certainly did. It literally bit the dust, and from the peculiar noise it kept making I gathered that it was conscious of draining the cup of indignity to the last dregs. My heart went out to it in its almost human agony. Had any animal ever before been in such a shameful position as this harmless, inoffensive ape, crouching there on all fours, like a slave beneath the foot of a Roman Emperor? Had there ever before been such an instance of all-conquering mental prowess as Stringer's victory over this two

hundred and fifty pound personification of muscular cruelty?

Gran'pa and I and the Menagerie Man stood there spell-bound and breathless, whilst Stringer slowly stroked the huge head and pulled at the little, furry ears.

"*Be careful!*" whispered Gran'pa.

But the warning came a second too late. With amazing swiftness the brute had suddenly shot out its long, hairy arm, gripped Stringer round the waist and tugged him to the bars of the cage.

As he struck them we heard the breath driven from his body, as if he had been hit a terrific blow below the belt, and the ape gave a hideous cry of triumph—long and deep, like the rolling of a drum.

We flung ourselves on the encircling arm, tearing at it and hammering it with clenched fists, but it was like trying to remove an iron band. The muscles were as hard as stone and I felt them quivering as they contracted more and more closely.

"Quick, George! Get that crowbar!" cried Gran'pa.

I turned round, rushed over to the spot where the implement was lying, some half-a-dozen yards away, and picked it up.

By dint of great effort, we managed at last to thrust it between the arm and Stringer. Then we pulled, lever fashion, using the bottom of the cage as a fulcrum.

"*Harder!*" shouted Gran'pa.

As the three of us tugged and strained we heard the wood splinter and give a little, and with a moan of anguish the imprisoned man collapsed. But there was still no sign of capitulation on the part of the gorilla.

It held on firmly and stoically and resolutely—the embodiment of inexorable revenge.

Above the fierce pounding of my heart, I heard the sound of running footsteps on the soft turf and, an eternity later, two men arrived.

"Grab it—and pull!" cried the Menagerie Man.

Even with the five of us straining our utmost at that crowbar the brute would not relax a muscle.

"Hold on . . . a minute . . ." gasped Gran'pa, suddenly letting go. "I've an idea!"

We hung on grimly and doggedly, and as we did so we saw the gorilla slowly wriggling its body upwards until its great jaws were opposite to Stringer's face, which was resting limply against the bars of the cage.

In a flash Gran'pa was to the rescue. He pulled the unconscious man's head away from the menace of those awful teeth, took out a penknife, and suddenly jabbed it into the fleshiest part of the brute's arm.

There was a scream of pain, a spluttered, half-human curse, a sudden relaxation, and the next moment everything gave way and we were sprawling on the ground.

We arose to the most frightful pandemonium imaginable. The gorilla was rushing excitedly round the cage, shaking at the bars, tearing up the earth with its hands, and flinging the stuff at us in a paroxysm of fury. Its language was hideous, and consisted of a series of short barks and high-pitched screams, which made my ears sing and sent the blood rushing through my veins like cold water.

"Can't you do anything?" I shouted at Gran'pa. "*Speak* to it, man!"

He inflated his chest, advanced towards the cage,

and gave that weird, inexpressible cry which in ape language was intended to signify alarm.

Three times he repeated it at the top of his voice. Gradually, the enraged brute grew quieter, uttered a moan of distress and retreated to a corner of the cage, shivering with fear. There it sat, like an old man, nursing its wounded arm and whimpering to itself about the callous injustice of life.

The Menagerie Man stared at Gran'pa and then at the gorilla.

"*Phew!*" he breathed, wiping his perspiring brow. "I don't know whether I'm on my head or my heels. It's . . . like a nightmare."

We picked up poor little Stringer, who had now regained consciousness, carried him into the nearest caravan and sent for a doctor. When he arrived we were informed that there were no injuries, beyond a couple of broken ribs and a severe bruising. This was certainly bad enough, but we all felt that it had been a miraculous escape—and a distinct warning to us not to tamper with the unknown forces of nature.

"This hypnotism," I said to Gran'pa, presently, "isn't going to be reliable enough a method. It's too risky. If that had happened in the African jungle there'd have been no Stringer left to tell the tale afterwards."

"Nonsense!" he replied. "The conditions out there will be quite the reverse of here."

"That's just what I've been saying!"

"I'm afraid you miss my point, George. What I mean is that *we* shall be in the cage and the gorillas outside. We shall simply adopt the procedure followed by 'What's-his-name?'—that explorer—when he was

studying the chimpanzee and gorilla in their native haunts. *He* lived in the cage, and the apes wandered around it. Surely that's simple enough!"

"Everything is—the moment *you* tackle it!" I exclaimed.

"Now don't be sarcastic, George! If you wish to withdraw just because of this little setback. . . ."

"I made no such suggestion. I'm keener than ever. But it's just as well to anticipate the difficulties we're bound to encounter."

"That's what I've been doing all along. Why do you think I've taken so much trouble over these initial experiments? Wasn't it with the idea of perfecting our method of attack before we actually get there?"

It seemed boorish to criticize a man so invincibly logical, and I tendered an apology for having done so.

"I think you'll agree, however," I said, "that we must have something better to fall back on than mere hypnotism."

"Granted! I've given much thought to the question."

"Any result?" I asked, anxiously.

"Y-e-s! I think I've pretty well solved it at last. Roughly, my plan is to wait in the cage with Stringer, call the gorilla to us, hold him for a moment or two with the magnetic gaze, and then let him have a whiff or two of gas!"

"Do you mean poison gas?" I gasped.

"Not exactly! We shall stupefy him and make him unconscious, if possible, but the stuff mustn't go beyond that. It won't have to leave any injurious effects behind. I've already ascertained that such a thing is possible."

"Your ingenuity is . . . limitless!" I exclaimed.

"It's necessary . . ." he answered, simply.

"I should think it is! Upon my word, Gran'pa!"

"*Ah!* Here's our friend the circus proprietor!"

He had just returned from issuing orders to some of his men and looked very pensive.

"I'm sorry all this trouble should have occurred, Mr. Boswell," said Gran'pa. "Particularly the episode with the knife. . . . If there is any monetary compensation I can make, I hope you won't fail to. . . ."

"Well," interrupted the other. "I think you've knocked a good bit off his value. He's never been exactly gentle in his ways, but he's a thousand times worse now than ever he was." He paused and then said, expressively: "I've just had another look at him. . . ."

"Oh, he'll quieten down again in a day or two."

The Menagerie Man shook his head.

"A brute like that never forgets—and never forgives. He'll brood on it. I shall have to strengthen that cage. Already he's bent a couple of the bars. . . ."

"But surely he's shown signs of a temper before this!"

"Yes! But not *spitefully*. Once a brute like that gets spiteful it's the very devil to pay. He'll start flinging earth about, screaming at people—doing anything he can to annoy or destroy."

Gran'pa looked a little ashamed of himself (but very interested).

"I can hardly believe that this affair will change his whole nature," he said. "At any rate, I sincerely hope not. I can only express my deepest regret, Mr. Boswell; and, as I said before, if there is anything I can do in the way of . . ."

"It's knocked at least a good fifty pounds off his

value . . . " observed the Menagerie Man, half to himself.

" That's a rather high figure."

" Well, we'll say forty. . . ."

Gran'pa looked a little annoyed. But in the end he paid up, and half-an-hour later we were conveying the bruised and broken Stringer by car to a hospital, where he was eventually trussed up in splints and bandages and handed over to us again for removal to town.

In the first class compartment which we reserved, he looked very quaint, sitting perfectly stiff and straight, with a couple of pillows behind his back.

" THIS SIDE UP! WITH CARE!" I couldn't help thinking.

" Any pain? " asked Gran'pa.

" Not much! It's a numbed sensation—with a sharp twinge every now and again."

He winced as we suddenly went rattling and swaying through a junction.

" It was most unfortunate! " said Gran'pa. " Still, we live and learn. . . . I hope this hasn't made you change your mind."

" No! " answered Stringer, biting his lip as we shot over a medley of joints in the line.

I admired the man's courage. There was no doubt that he felt the pain far more than he cared to admit; and he had come through an ordeal such as few men would be willing to risk again.

" You're the stuff we want on this expedition," said Gran'pa. " I'm proud of you, Stringer! "

From Paddington Station we brought him home by taxi, put him to bed and then fought despairingly

against the volley of questions which Molly had ready for us.

"What's happened, Daddy?" she asked, a little wide-eyed at the vision of trussed humanity.

"Oh! . . . A slight accident. Mr. Stringer has broken a rib or two, and we're letting him stay here until he's well again."

"I know where you've been!" she said, when she had absorbed this item of news.

"Who told you?"

"I did, George!" answered Gran'pa. "Will you get it into your head that Molly is part and parcel of this expedition."

"If you mean that she's coming gorilla-hunting with us . . . " I began, excitedly.

"She'll come to Gaboon, anyway," he said, quietly.

"It's absurd. The idea of a child of twelve . . ."

"Daddy! You are *mean!*" she cried. "I shan't stop at home. If you leave me I . . . I shall run away . . . and I *won't* go to school. . . .

"What's that, young woman?"

"Let her alone, George! You don't deserve a daughter! The child has spirit and it ought to be fostered, not squashed. In my young days a girl of her age would have wept her eyes out at the mere thought of leaving home—let alone going abroad and perhaps flying by aeroplane. This is the chance of her life. Isn't it, Molly?"

"Yes!" she cried, jubilantly, running to him and jumping on his knee.

I groaned. These two . . . *children* were inseparable—and incorrigible.

"The sea voyage," went on Gran'pa, relentlessly,

" will do her fifty times as much good as all the schooling in the world."

" I doubt it . . . " I said, feeling like a dog in the manger.

" *We* don't! Do we, Molly? "

" No . . . *fear!* " she chortled, simply pouncing on the last word. " It will be the loveliest thing that ever was! " She got down from the knees of her confederate and protector and ran over to me: " Oh! Daddy! You might let me."

" You'd be terribly sick," I said, pulling at her hair.

" I wouldn't mind a bit. It'll be only at first. I should soon get over it."

" There are no theatres or moving pictures in Gaboon."

" Pooh! I can see those any time! "

" You'd leave Nanny? " I asked, playing my last trump.

She hesitated a moment—until the obvious struck her.

" But couldn't she come, too? "

" By all means! " I said, glaring at Gran'pa. " This is a quiet little family trip. We might even invite a few dozen friends as well."

" Now, George! " admonished Gran'pa. " Don't be feeble! Molly's suggestion is quite natural, but unfortunately, my dear," he said, addressing her direct, " it would not be convenient to take Nanny. She will stay and look after the house. And, in any case, she wouldn't want to come. She was never intended for quick transit from place to place."

Like all the rest of Gran'pa's ideas, this one of taking Molly with us to Gaboon looked idiotic at first; then it slowly emerged into a perfectly reasonable

though slightly unconventional project. After all, the sea voyage would undoubtedly do her good. The question was, would the climate of Gaboon do likewise? I asked this ninety-five-year-old usurper of my parental authority what he had to say to that?

"Oh, I don't think you need worry, George. There are spots on the north bank of the river which are moderately healthy, so I've ascertained. In addition, we shall seldom be away for more than a few nights at a time—that's the beauty of aeroplaning!"

"Meanwhile, where's Molly going to stay? She can't wander about alone."

"She'll be with other whites—at one of the mission stations."

"Heaven help the missionaries!" I gasped.

"You are rude, Daddy!" cried Molly.

"After all, my dear," I explained, "a missionary is only sent out to enlighten the poor misguided heathen —he isn't supposed to tackle the modern white girl as well."

"Don't you believe it, George," cried Gran'pa. "They'll be delighted to have a bundle of mischief like Molly trotting around. It'll conjure up visions of the homeland—and all the rest of it. . . . She'll have the time of her life there. I've managed to obtain an introduction to the Rev. Timothy Brady from a very old friend of his who knows the place well. The station is at Baraka, on the summit of a hill and near the north shore of the Gaboon river. There are plenty of lime and fruit trees there, as well as the cocoanut and mango. Also, a church—a library—a *school* . . ." he said, looking at Molly.

"*Oh!*" she exclaimed. "I think it's horrid. . . ."

". . . . Which, of course, she will not be obliged to attend," added Gran'pa.

"Hooray!"

"You seem to have arranged everything very nicely," I observed.

"I always do, George. If I left it to you we should never get anything done."

It was a baseless accusation, but I didn't bother to refute it by reminding him of who found Alfred—the originator of all the trouble. He would only have blustered.

"I suppose," I conceded at last, "that if missionaries and their wives can live there, a few months won't hurt Molly. Remind me in the morning, dear, to write a note to your school teacher, and you can take it with you."

"Won't all the other girls be jealous!" she cried. "I told some of them I should probably be going out to Africa in a few weeks time—and they were mad! Kitty Vincent said I was just boasting—and I wanted to fight her. . . ."

For nearly five minutes she continued in this vein.

"You seem to have taken everything for granted, my child," I remarked. "Supposing I had refused? What then?"

"But, Daddy, I knew you wouldn't!"

Gran'pa arose and stretched himself.

"George," he said, "that child's an atavism—a throw-back! She throws back to me. And I'm proud of it! Come and give your poor old great-great-granddad a kiss, my dear."

Molly saluted him and told him he wasn't the *teeny-weeniest* bit old.

"Perhaps you're right . . ." he mused.

Then he chuckled to himself and commenced whistling "Sally in Our Alley." It was followed by "Sweet Alice Ben Bolt." Finally he burst into parodied song:

"Oh, Molly! Oh! Molly Barnett . . .
Oh, Molly—where e'er did she *get?*
She's suddenly flown
To regions unknown,
Along with a man and his aeroplane-*ette!*"

"How's that for a modern version? Eh, George?"

"Very true to life!" I laughed.

"Ah!" he cried. "It's good to be so young that you can feel yourself back with some of those old songs again. I heard of 'Dorothy Dean' and her 'flying machine' at the Tivoli Music Hall—over fifty years ago. . . . And yet . . . I wasn't so young even then. It's a queer business, George!"

He couldn't contain himself that night. He played the piano, sang dead and long-forgotten songs, danced a "solo" minuet to his own whistled accompaniment, and even showed us how the old-time "saraband" went.

"That's the first dance I had with your great-great-grandmother," he told Molly.

Thereupon, he suddenly grew silent.

Had he loved that dead woman, I wondered? How much did he miss her, now that he had come to his second youth again? Was this rejuvenation ever tinctured with regret? Might it not be that the backward march through life was sometimes a journey of great loneliness of soul? All the friends of his boyhood, his youth, and even of his middle-age had died long ago. In a sense, he was a solitary figure, living in a world peopled only by his memories of the dead. . . .

I watched him go pensively up to his easy chair and drop into it with a deep sigh, and as he did so, some sixth sense seemed to give him an inkling of my thoughts.

He looked up at me.

"Memories . . ." he said. "They're strange things, George. Those little dances. . . . What visions they recall!"

"May they be only the pleasant ones," I answered, inadequately.

"Ah! That's the trouble! I wouldn't mind the others. One can shake them off. It's the pleasant ones which stick. . . . You feel that so many things might have been different—if only you had known. . . . The happy moment, the great joy—which lasted only an instant—and ended in nothing. . . ."

He hesitated, as if he had half-turned one of the hidden pages of his past life and dreaded to read the message written by a relentless fate.

"There was a minuet," he said, at last. "It went like this."

He rose to his feet again and began softly humming to himself. With a courtly, old-fashioned grace, he went through the steps, his eyes half-closed and his hands extended as if towards some invisible partner. He was in another world, another time, where the mad and feverish jazzing of to-day was unknown. As he turned and pirouetted I almost heard the faint swish of the crinoline and the murmur of some hidden and distant orchestra.

For nearly ten minutes he held Molly and myself silent and entranced, and then he suddenly stopped, bowed to his dream-partner,—and returned to the world of grim reality.

"I'm an old fool . . ." he said. "Over fifty years ago. . . . She may be dead by now."

And, as he mused, so the story of romance slowly unfolded itself. His married life had not been happy. The oldest sin on earth had been committed. He had married, not the girl he loved, but the girl whom his parents in their worldly wisdom had chosen. Money? Partly—for he was unable to support a wife without some help from his father. But, mainly, because life for the young was ordered differently in those days. One was told to do a thing and, in the end—one did it.

Little boys and girls were brought up on the "to be seen and not heard" principle, until obedience to one's elders was in the blood. It was a religion, and few there were that escaped its stultifying influence.

"I was only twenty," he said. "What *could* I do?"

And when he was forty-five, and was in England on business, SHE came—a chance meeting at a big country ball, a dance, and then the keen, swift birth of love and that tragic realization of the impossibility of its fulfilment.

"I saw her again—three times in all. But there was my duty to my wife and children in America. I knew that it was hopeless, and so—I said, 'Good-by.' There were tears, George. Even I . . . crumpled up a little. . . . I fled back to the States immediately—I was afraid of myself. . . . It was a long time ago, and yet— Do you think I'm foolish to hope that she might . . . still be alive—and still remember?"

"No!" I answered.

"It isn't that I haven't thought of such a possibility before. But I always seemed so old. I couldn't dispel the feeling that she still had eternal youth on her side. You see, she was only twenty-one when we

last met. Even now I can't picture her as any older than that."

He fell back into the silence of his own thoughts.

"George," he cried at last. "Why shouldn't I? I'm a comparatively young man again. Supposing I *did* find her and could persuade her to join me—rejuvenated? . . . Even after all these years I can still remember where she lived."

"Good Lord, Gran'pa!" I couldn't help exclaiming.

"And why not?" he challenged with a sudden look of defiance in his eyes.

"It's absurd. It isn't even proper. . . ."

"*Proper,* George? You seem to suggest at times that I'm not a human being!"

His face was flushed with excitement and he took huge, deep breaths, which inflated his chest almost to the point of bursting off his waistcoat buttons. Was it the spring air, the new glands, or merely old-world memories that roused him to such ecstasy?

"If you're going to begin resurrecting some antiquated love affair," I said, "we shan't get to Africa for months. Which is it going to be—love or adventure?"

"*Both!*" cried Gran'pa.

CHAPTER X

THE MASSING OF THE ANCIENTS

I HAD been needlessly alarmed at the possibility of undue delay in leaving for Africa. Gran'pa undertook the resurrection of his fifty-year-old love affair in the same whirlwind fashion that had characterized his conversion to the glandular theory of youth.

He should have been a detective, for, in less than a week, he had traced the whereabouts of a little white-haired old maid of seventy summers. Her name was Sally Rebecca Froud. In spite of the antiquity of her Christian names, I liked her from the first. She had the sweetest and daintiest manners imaginable, and when Gran'pa invited her round to dinner one evening, I saw at once that he was desperately fond of her even now.

The meal was one of the most enjoyable I can remember. She brought to it just that subtle, artistic atmosphere which would have been imparted by the presence of a very valuable and exquisite piece of old Dresden china. All the grace and irreproachable womanliness of the crinoline period were there, but without any of its narrow-minded bigotry. She seemed to personify all the attributes one requires to make a grandmother tolerable and lovable. Her hands fluttered over Molly's fair hair like white moths, and when she stood on tiptoes to kiss her, it was with the air of a queen saluting a young goddess. When she moved there was a faint rustle of hidden silk, and the tender-

ness which dwelt in her lips and eyes soothed and captivated one immediately.

Although Gran'pa had told her the exciting story of his rejuvenation, every now and again I caught her looking at him as if she were not quite certain of his identity. It must have been strange for her to see the twenty-five-years-older-than-herself lover of fifty years ago sitting there, the very embodiment of a vigorous man of only forty-five. . . . But, to me, it was stranger still to think of Gran'pa as a lovesick swain. After a man or woman has reached middle age, it is absurd for them to delude themselves that they are still "in love." Affection, tolerance, understanding, sympathy, friendship—any of these lukewarm expressions may be applicable; but the hot, consuming fire of youth seeking youth—no! And yet . . . there was Gran'pa, his eyes shining with passionate devotion, his hand trembling as he passed his loved one the cruet, and his voice unsteady and caressing when he spoke to her.

"Would you believe it," he said, suddenly turning to me, "Sally hasn't a single unsound tooth in her head!"

"Sally" blushed as prettily as a maiden of sixteen —and I mumbled something intended to express amazement, without laying undue emphasis on her great age.

In these degenerate days of artificial denture and gold fillings it was an accomplishment of which she might well be proud. Even immature Molly possessed a crowned tooth—as the result of an encounter with a golf ball—and as for Gran'pa himself. . . . Well, he hadn't (and couldn't have) suffered from toothache for over thirty years.

"That's the result of care, George," said Gran'pa, drifting into one of his lecturing moods. "Attend

to your health when young and you get your reward with compound interest when you're . . . er, that is, later on in life," he added, tactfully. "What'll happen to the modern cake-and-chocolate eating flapper of to-day when *she's* seventy or eighty, I should like to know? . . ."

He continued in this vein for some time, until at last Sally Rebecca interrupted him by saying that she thought Molly was adorable—and Molly glanced at me through the corner of her eyes, closed the nearest, and then gently kicked me under the table.

"Present company excepted, of course," said Gran'pa, a trifle embarrassed.

"Ah!" laughed his guest. "You're the same as ever, Charles."

It sounded very peculiar to find her addressing him by his Christian name. I had never heard it used before. To me he had always been "Gran'pa"—the synonym for a sort of impersonal unit of the vague species Ancestor—and not to hear him referred to as such seemed to bring him down from his lofty pedestal and make him too human and ordinary. I could no more picture him as somebody's "Charles," or "Charlie," than I could visualize the King of England in pajamas. Some things are so homely that they seem disrespectful. Gran'pa as "Charles" was one of them.

The visit ended in Gran'pa's seeing Sally Rebecca home in a taxi—and returning two hours later!

"Well," I asked, "is your lady-love willing to undergo this rejuvenation treatment?"

"She won't promise, yet."

"Now listen to me, Gran'pa," I said, firmly. "I like the lady immensely and I admire your taste, but

we can't have this gorilla expedition sidetracked for the sake of a mere woman. You'll have to insist on a definite answer by the end of next week, say. Either she will or she won't; but, whatever her decision, we must leave for Africa this month. If she agrees, all the more incentive to your trying to make the expedition a success; if she refuses—well, we still owe a duty to humanity. You've sufficient sense at your age to know that you can't afford to fritter away your time on an abortive love-affair with a lady old enough to be your mother."

"You know what women are, George," he replied meekly.

"I do. That's why I recommend strong handling."

"She recognizes in me quite sufficient proof that she *can* regain her youth. But she thinks that it's not . . . right."

"Fiddlesticks! If she loves you, her answer is obvious."

"You must admit, George, that it also requires some courage," he replied, thoughtfully.

"Of course it does. But love thrives on courage and self-sacrifice. Put her to the test. Let her endure it."

He was silent for awhile.

"You think that I ought to *insist?*" he said, at last.

"Absolutely!"

"Y-e-s! . . . I suppose I must. . . ."

"The least sign of weakness will be fatal," I continued. "Unless you're careful, she'll go on wavering—it's so difficult to get people at that age to make a move. But you can't marry a woman . . . who feels and looks thirty years older than yourself."

"N—o!"

"Then it's agreed that you give her a couple of weeks in which to make up her mind, and that we leave for Africa before the month's out in any case?"

"Yes! . . . I agree!" he answered, slowly.

After this, events moved swiftly. At my suggestion, Gran'pa devoted the whole of his energies to the courting of his beloved, while I busied myself with the final preparations for our expedition abroad.

There was a great deal to be done. I arranged with Dr. Croft to accompany us to Gaboon, obtained a couple of pilots for our aeroplanes, saw to the medical and surgical equipment, unearthed an interpreter for the natives, and then set about forming the necessary nucleus of old men for our Rejuvenation Sanatorium in the Kalahari.

This last was the most exciting task of all, for we had to keep the matter secret—I was so afraid of Government interference—and yet at the same time we had to noise our scheme abroad. The daily press was chosen as the best medium of approach, and the following advertisement was inserted in seven different papers:—

> "TO ALL MEN OVER SEVENTY.—A philanthropist, desirous of carrying out the new system of rejuvenation wishes to get into touch with at least one hundred old men who would be willing to submit to a grafting of new thyroid glands. Applicants, who must be reasonably healthy and in possession of all their faculties, should communicate with the box number quoted at the end of this advertisement. They should give full particulars of their age, ailments (other than old

age), and social position; state the reason for desiring to extend their life; and also express their willingness to defray the average net cost per individual of the *actual treatment only*. The glands will be provided free, and a special ship will also be chartered for the passage out to South Africa, where the operation will be performed by skilled medical men. A proportion of the applicants will be interviewed and a selection made of those suitable by a man of 95, who has himself submitted to this novel treatment and who will afford proof positive of its extraordinary power to banish old age."

It may not have been a particularly alluring announcement; but it was at least mildly intriguing. Many papers took up the refrain. Was it a hoax, asked some of them? Was it some new confidence trick? Or was it a genuine attempt to start a rejuvenation cult? Coming at a time when there were few divorces or murders, when Parliament was in recess, and when the labor world was temporarily quiescent, it proved to be of some journalistic value.

The papers in which we advertised sent down young and persistent reporters to try and get lurid details for their insatiable public. But Gran'pa and I were not to be "drawn." We whetted their curiosity, but insisted on the privacy of that box number. The papers in which we did not advertise speculated, and sneered, and joked, and moralized, each according to its lights. And slowly the whole thing developed into a little newspaper boom—and the letters began pouring in.

We got three hundred and seventy applications for a new lease of life within the first ten days. Some

of them even came from the inmates of workhouses and almhouses.

An army pensioner of 97 wrote:—

"DEAR SIR,

"I should like to try your glands but haven't enough money to pay for being done. Hoping you can arrange this for me, I beg to remain,

"Dear Sir,

"Yours fraternally,

"JOHN SLEEP.

"P. S.—Could you come and see me one morning. I am healthy except for my feet, which are eat up with rheumatics so that I cannot get about much."

"Chuck it aside," said Gran'pa. "This isn't a new bath salts or mineral waters treatment. We can't do anything with rheumaticky people."

"Poor devil," I said. "He'll think that poverty is the real bar."

"Very well! Write and tell him that it isn't. Say we're full up, but that he'll be put on the waiting list."

"And leave him hoping—in vain?"

"While there's hope there's life at that age," said Gran'pa. "It'll give him a new interest in existence. In a business like this we can't be influenced by sentimental considerations."

We had letters from people who wished to rejuvenate their parents or grandparents, from people who were under 70 (but felt slightly over), and a few from old ladies. One of these last, a spinster, wished to remain on earth a few years longer in order to look after her dogs and to minister to "poor dumb crea-

tures" belonging to others. We even had an application from a ninety-one-year-old member of the House of Lords, who was evidently dreaming of his lost greatness and hoping that, with youth on his side, he might be able to stem the tide of the new labor movement and save Britain from the dogs. His letter was really an essay on politics, liberally peppered with "damns."

"Here's a rigmarole from a lord," I said to Gran'pa. "He has a mission to perform in the way of . . ."

"So have I," answered Gran'pa, tersely. "I'm an American—a republican. These wonderful, complicated and aristocratic titles all leave me cold. Let him die—or get his own glands."

A little reluctantly, I put the coronetted notepaper among the rejected and turned to the next application.

> "Sir," it began austerely, "If your appeal is genuine I would have you beware, lest by tampering with the inscrutable laws of nature, you bring down on your head the malediction of God. According to our deserts are we spared to live on this earth," and so on. . . .

"According to our deserts!" exclaimed Gran'pa, when I showed him the document. "What about the youngsters who were killed in the war? . . . Burn the damned thing, George! . . . And listen to this:—

> "'Dear Sir,
>
> "'I'm a man of 81 with the heart and brain of a youngster. I want to live another twenty or thirty years because I think that the next two or three decades will be crammed with more progress (and excitement!) than the whole of the last cen-

tury. Having survived the crawling stage, the human race is beginning to run. By the greatest misfortune in life, I was born eighty years too soon. I can't alter it now, but I can at least mitigate the blow—with your help. If you have the hundredth place still vacant, will you temporarily reserve it for me until I have the pleasure of a personal interview? I am willing to defray the cost of my own treatment and of any six others you care to choose as worthy of your philanthropy.

"Sincerely yours,

"THOMAS FINIKINS."

"If that man isn't an American," cried Gran'pa. "I'll give a thousand dollars to the first beggar I meet. We'll include him, George. I like the tone of the letter, too. It shows a zest in life. Just the thing we want in these blasé days."

So Thomas joined the ranks of the chosen!

The applicants were divided into three groups—the picked men (ninety strong), the reserves (forty-seven), and the rejected. The first would be the vanguard of this new army of old men marching on the Citadels of Youth; the second would form the nucleus of the army itself, when it drew recruits from all parts of the world and became a vital fighting force. Meanwhile, we arranged interviews with the chosen ninety.

The proceedings which followed were, naturally, treated as strictly private; and we insisted on a written pledge of secrecy from each before giving any further particulars. Three of them would not give this pledge—and so to these we still remained an enigmatic box number. But the remaining eighty-seven were pre-

sented with cards of admission to a small hall in Battersea which we had hired for the inaugural meeting.

In case of trouble, we took with us Stringer, the gentle hypnotist, who had completely recovered from his bout with the gorilla. We also arranged for Dr. Croft to attend, in order to perform the very necessary medical examinations. I was to act the part of sidesman and ticket collector. Gran'pa was to be the lecturer and sole exhibit of the new Rejuvenation Club (as we had decided to call it).

The fateful day having duly arrived, the four of us proceeded to the hall and prepared to welcome the first arrival.

He appeared half-an-hour before time, a tall, thin man, with a peculiar bend, like a huge interrogation mark, an eye-glass, and a long white moustache which was partly visible even to those who approached him from the rear. With a brisk step, he came hurrying up the deserted road, swinging a cane and puffing vigorously at a great bulldog pipe.

"Retired army man, by the look of him," observed Gran'pa, who was standing with me in the doorway of the hall.

"That'll be Major Atkinson," I said.

"Of course . . . there was a major."

When he reached us, he produced his card of admission and inclined himself a little stiffly and self-consciously. Gran'pa extended a hand pleasantly, and said:

"Welcome, sir! I hope the remainder are as promising as yourself. As a man of ninety-five, I may be permitted to compliment you on your youthful appearance."

The major gasped.

"Ninety-five . . . ! You're not . . . ?"

"Yes!" answered Gran'pa, proudly expanding his chest. "I'm the living, irrefutable proof of everything you've been promised."

"Marvellous, sir! . . . Er— . . marvellous! You're an American, I perceive. A wonderful country for which I have the greatest admiration and respect. But . . . if I express a doubt . . . you will, I hope, pardon me. . . ."

"By all means! Come inside!"

In the hall we were prepared for the doubting Thomases. Gran'pa not only had his birth certificate, but also an imposing array of photographs which would shatter the most incredulous. There were family portraits of himself from fifty years of age and upwards and, most convincing of all, there was the series of likenesses taken since the operation—showing the daily progress of rejuvenation.

"By gad, sir!" cried the major. "This is a miracle!"

"It's certainly very near it," observed Gran'pa, studying a picture of himself at the decrepit, pre-rejuvenation age of ninety-two.

"And you *feel* young?"

Gran'pa caught hold of a couple of seats, arranged their backs parallel-bar fashion and raised and inverted himself like an acrobat.

"The devil!" exclaimed our spectator. "I haven't done a thing like that for thirty or forty years, sir!"

"In twelve months' time you'll be jumping five-barred gates!"

The major, overcome with emotion, sat down and mopped his brow.

At the same moment, the next arrival appeared.

He was a little protuberant man with white whiskers and a red face."

"Am I right?" he queried in a thin, small voice.

"I hope so!" answered Gran'pa, cheerfully.

Then they came in droves. I went to the door to take the tickets and saw a sight which nearly moved me to instant flight. Clustered round the entrance, like a great swarm of black beetles, was a collection of fifty or more old men, clad apparently in every variety of clothes they could unearth or discover. There were fashions which took one back nearly a century, and some which might have been created only yesterday—all in dead black or dark navy, except for one bucolic old *roué* who wore a light check suit and a gray trilby.

They shuffled and shoved their way to the door with a sort of blind and obstinate impoliteness, fumbling for their tickets, grunting, clearing their throats, and mumbling to themselves like ill-tempered children. As they peered up at me and asked numerous and absurd questions, my irritation increased. They seemed mildly curious and very intent on pushing one another; but there was no trace of enthusiasm in their manner, no spontaneity, no zest. It was as if the whole business was an almost impersonal affair, and when the full eighty-seven were at last seated I saw in a flash what the assembly reminded me of.

As I looked at their great, solemn, bewhiskered faces, their gloomy clothes and their stiff, uncomfortable postures it became impossible to shake off the conviction that this was a gathering of learned scientists about to discuss (but certainly not to participate in) this new and wonderful discovery of eternal youth. Also, it might conceivably have been a committee on divorce law reform, or a company meeting, or a teetotal

prohibition campaign—but, whatever it was, I could not bring myself to view these people as the world's first contingent of volunteers for the army of rejuvenation.

It was the most august body of ancient and unromantic-looking people I have ever seen, and, as I stood scanning their faces and revolting at their working mouths and fluttering whiskers, a sense of utter failure and hopelessness seized me. Was this our material? Was this the clay from which we had to fashion the grace and beauty of Youth? Was this the promise of the future? God forbid. . . . !

In the midst of these gloomy speculations, Gran'pa stepped briskly on to the platform and raised an authoritative hand. Immediately, there was a great clearing of throats, a cackle of coughings, and a rumble of shuffling feet. Then silence.

After a quick bow, Gran'pa placed his lips to the megaphone, which he had so thoughtfully provided for the benefit of those who were suffering from the commonest defect of old age.

His voice was loud enough to reach not only the deaf, but to rouse even the dead. It was stupendous, overpowering—appalling.

In a terse and convincing manner, he proceeded to give full details of his own marvellous case and to explain that, while he wished to benefit others, he insisted on recruiting only men of enthusiasm, imagination, courage, and *go*. Doubters and laggards were useless; but he could promise those who did come to Africa that they should have the best of everything—the best food, the best care and attention and the best and most powerful glands—those of the male gorilla.

Before embarking, however, all new members of the club would have to take an oath of secrecy not to divulge

its objects until they had actually been accomplished. Ostensibly, they would be emigrating because they were " fed up with England, and disgusted with the high rate of taxation, and alarmed at the spread of Socialism."

He also stated that, instead of slaughtering the gorillas which were captured, their thyroid glands would be replaced by similar ones taken from goats. When the gorillas had recovered from the operation they would be conveyed back to the jungle and given their freedom again. That was as near to humanitarianism as one could possibly get. . . .

Finally, he introduced me as his great-grandson (the " brains of the movement! "), Dr. Croft as the surgeon-in-chief, and Stringer as the animal magnetist.

" Gentlemen," he concluded, without any unnecessary peroration, " I thank you for your patience and attention."

Loud and prolonged applause—followed by much coughing.

So ended one of the most momentous speeches in history.

Descending from the platform, Dr. Croft and Gran'pa passed into the little anteroom at the back of the hall, where the medical examination was to be held, while Stringer and I busied ourselves with personally conducted tours round the photographic exhibits.

We finished this last in about an hour and a half, but the examination, with its rationed twenty minutes per candidate, promised to take three or four days at least. Arrangements were accordingly made for further appointments at Dr. Croft's surgery and, at 5.30 p.m., the assembly dispersed and Gran'pa, Stringer and I returned home.

"Any trouble with the sceptics?" asked Gran'pa, as we sat down to supper.

"Yes!" said Stringer, to my great surprise. "There were five or six of them a bit rocky, but I managed to get their eye when I was talking—and put matters right at once."

"Sort of . . . . convinced them . . . . eh?" chortled Gran'pa between his munches. "That old chap with the let-us-pray whiskers was one of them?"

"Yes! He was a bit of a handful at first, but came round in the end, like a little child."

"Good . . . .! By the way, George, those whiskers'll never do. They're insanitary and ugly things—although I once wore them myself. We must get these people shaved. It'll tone them up and be a good start. Give them more confidence—more freedom. . . . Nice lettuce, this! I shall miss the garden out in Africa, George."

When Stringer had retired I thought it was time to question Gran'pa once more on the progress of his love suit with Sally. He had neither mentioned her name nor seen her for a whole week.

"Everything is going beautifully, Gran'pa," I observed. "To-morrow, I'm fixing up about the steamer, and on Thursday the 'planes are leaving for Libreville. With luck, we should be able to start by the fifth of next month at the latest. Apparently, the only thing still undecided is whether Miss Froud joins us."

"I shall get her answer by the morning's post," said Gran'pa, in even tones. It was evident that he was suffering keenly from the suspense and I admired his quiet courage. "I shall come with you in any case. This was made perfectly clear to her. As I told her, if

she decides to join us she will have the honor of being the first lady member of the club."

"That was a brain wave!" I exclaimed. "For an old woman, I've never met a keener exponent of the equality of the sexes. She'll come—if it's only to show that she's as good as any man at being rejuvenated!"

"Do you think so, George?" he asked, nervously. "It will be a terrible blow if she refuses. I feel as if I've waited fifty years for this. . . ."

"I shouldn't worry, if I were you! Everything will come right in the end. Even if she won't accompany us now she will be bound to give way when we return—with our eighty-seven rejuvenated recruits. Not even a woman could withstand such overwhelming evidence as that."

"It isn't any question of doubt, George. It's more a sort of maidenly modesty—almost fear. She's very sensitive and shy. She thinks, too, that the whole business is crude and inartistic—but, as I told her, so is any operation or medical attention. Women are very peculiar, George. If they instinctively dislike a thing it's no use trying to reason with them—they'll only dislike it all the more. . . . I suggested that *female* glands might meet with her approval, and the idea seemed to pacify her somewhat. But I'm not very hopeful; and, even if she does agree, I feel that it will be from a sense of martyrdom."

He went to bed in a very pessimistic mood that night, and when he came down in the morning to an empty letter-box his grief was touching to see. He ate practically no breakfast, spoke very little to anyone, ignored Molly's motherly concern, and looked at least ten years older than he had the previous day.

"What time are you going over to Dr. Croft's?" I asked.

"I don't think I shall go until this afternoon."

"But isn't he expecting you? One of us should be there."

"Will you go, George?" he requested pathetically.

"I can't. I've that appointment about the steamer."

"Stringer—would you mind?" he asked.

"Not at all!"

"I don't feel . . . . very fit, this morning," murmured Gran'pa, apologetically. "I think I overdid it yesterday."

"For a man of your age," said Stringer, "I don't know how you kept going as you did. A day's rest will do you good."

So Stringer went, and Gran'pa moved restlessly about the house, like a man on the border of a nervous breakdown.

"I'm inclined to think that you overtaxed your strength at that meeting," I said.

"It isn't that. It's this . . . . terrible suspense. My God, George, women are the very devil—even when they are angels!"

"You mustn't worry. Go and see her."

"I promised that I wouldn't until she wrote."

"It's quite possible that she has missed the first post. Wait till to-morrow. Meanwhile, come with me this morning. It'll stop your brooding."

"I don't like leaving home. Suppose she's ill and sends a wire, or . . . ."

The front door bell rang and I saw Gran'pa go a shade paler and hold his breath. I, too, had the sense of something ominous in the air.

A few seconds later Nanny entered the room and announced:

"Miss Froud!"

There was a dramatic silence; and then Gran'pa suddenly thrust Nanny gently aside, strode out into the hall, and took his beloved in his arms.

I caught sight of her face through the chink in the door. It was raised to his, and if ever a man read a message in a woman's eyes, Gran'pa did at that divine moment of ecstasy.

"After half a century!" I thought. "America and England . . . . Hands across the sea! . . . . Love is deathless, indeed . . . .!"

CHAPTER XI

THE GORILLA COUNTRY

SALLY REBECCA having at last surrendered, Gran'pa became his usual energetic self again, and in no more than three days after that touching scene in the hall we were ready to set sail for Africa.

The name of the ship which we had chartered was "The Pilgrim Father." This, together with the cargo of eighty-seven aged optimists, gazing pensively over the vessel's side as it steamed out of Plymouth Sound, must have made the watching townspeople imagine that we were in the moving picture trade. They may even have thought that, presently, we should commence some sort of "stunt."

We managed, however, to get nearly half-a-dozen miles away from land before anything exciting happened.

The trouble commenced in bunk 64, which was occupied by an ancient and retired stockbroker, known as William Garton.

On boarding the vessel he had immediately gone below, suffering from the quaint delusion that the best preventive of sea-sickness was to commence a voyage deep in slumber. In this way, he argued, one became unconsciously acclimatized to the motion, and when one at last awoke the danger was passed.

It certainly wasn't in this particular case; for he awoke with a start (possibly from the throes of some evil nightmare), sprang out of his bunk and came tearing up on deck, clad only in pajamas and nightcap.

"Stop the ship!" he cried wildly. "Stop it at once!"

Fortunately, Gran'pa was near and was able to deal with the matter before a panic ensued.

"What's happened now?" he asked, with a murderous look in his eyes.

"I've changed my mind! I want to go back!"

"Don't be absurd!"

William Garton drew himself up to the full extent of his five-feet-four (or thereabouts).

"Will you kindly put me ashore, sir?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Gran'pa. "You've signed on for this voyage—and you're coming."

"This .... this ...." he stormed, ..." is abduction —forcible abduction!"

"Nothing of the sort! You may have changed your mind, but that's no reason why I should change the course of this boat. Run back to bed like a sensible fellow, before you catch cold."

"If you don't stop this infernal ship and turn round I'll .... jump overboard."

He dashed to the rail and commenced mounting it—apparently with every intention of fulfilling his threat.

But Gran'pa was too quick for him. He sprang forward, gripped the little man by the pajama jacket, and hauled him back to safety again.

"This is mutiny, sir!" cried Gran'pa. "I won't have such rebellious behavior on board of my ship. For two pins, I'd clap you in irons!"

"Let me go! .... I'll have you prosecuted! .... D'you hear that?"

"It—leaves—me—cold!" panted Gran'pa, struggling with him. "George! Give me a hand!"

I elbowed my way through the surrounding crowd

of other old men and tried to persuade our excitable friend that he was making himself very ridiculous.

"Do remember where you are!" I scolded. "There are ladies aboard." (I couldn't see them, by the way.) "You might at least go and get decently dressed before continuing this discussion."

"I'll give you a thousand pounds to put me back," he half sobbed.

"I wouldn't do it for twenty!" cried Gran'pa. "It's a matter of principle. You're a coward, sir! *Pah!* . . . ."

Without further ado, we took hold of him very firmly by each arm and led him, still struggling and shouting, down below.

"Now!" said Gran'pa, when the three of us were alone. "What the devil do you mean by making this infernal fuss? You've upset everyone aboard. What sort of an impression do you think those other old men will get? They'll be imagining all manner of unnerving things. If you don't shut up, I'll . . . . wring your neck!"

"You're a . . . . damned great bully!" whimpered the rebel, feebly attempting to show some spirit.

"Possibly! But someone has to be master here—and it's going to be me. Just get that into your thick skull. When we reach Africa you can go to blazes as far as I'm concerned. *I* don't want to force you into rejuvenation. There are too many others deserving of it, without wasting our precious glands on a miserable coward who gets the wind up at the very commencement. Now get out of my sight, before I kick you out . . . . !"

As he crept shamefacedly away, I felt a little sorry for him.

"After all," I said to Gran'pa, "there's some excuse—at his age."

"Nonsense! The man's at least fifteen to twenty years younger than I am. Either he's beginning to feel sea-sick, or else he's funking the whole thing. Whatever it is, we can't have him demoralizing the rest of the old boys by such insane antics. Some of them were scared to death. An ill-balanced man like that aboard is a constant menace to the peace. He ought to have brought his nurse. . . . I must get Stringer to have a quiet little chat with him."

So we put him into Stringer's capable hands—with the astounding result that next day the old man came and apologized to Gran'pa.

"I.... er.... suddenly became very homesick...." he explained, sheepishly.

"I thought you were just .... *sea*-sick," snapped Gran'pa. "However, you're all right now?"

"Quite, thank you! I ask your pardon, Mr. Hadley."

Gran'pa's features relaxed and he extended a hand of brotherly forgiveness.

"Not another word, laddie!" he beamed. "I should have felt just the same at your age...."

It sounded like a father talking to a son—but it looked exactly the opposite.

When the old man had gone, Gran'pa winked at me and said:

"You'll find that he'll be as good as gold for the rest of the voyage. A great man is Stringer. . . .He's like a bromide draught. Hope he has the same effect on the gorillas. . . . Meanwhile, we might get him to have a chat with the others. They all look a bit nervy. It's the change, I expect."

Stringer thus became a sort of institution for sooth-

ing the worries of the aged. With remarkable tact and perseverance, he took them in hand one by one, quelled their naturally quarrelsome dispositions, eliminated their homesickness, and even comforted them when they were sea-sick. He was here, there, and everywhere—far more like a ministering angel than a gorilla hunter—and I really believe that the old people at last grew to love him.

It became an interesting speculation as to whether Stringer hoped to be remembered in some of their wills, or whether he behaved as he did purely from a deep sense of duty. Gran'pa maintained that he was not as simple as he looked. On the other hand, Sally Rebecca thought that he was the noblest man she had ever met—a confession that made Gran'pa childishly jealous.

The main thing, however, was that the voyage was a great success. Once we were well out at sea, no one quarrelled (except Gran'pa and I); no one was seriously ill; and no one exhibited any desire to "back out."

We evolved into a brotherhood. There were card parties, chess and domino matches, smoking concerts, and even dances. Perhaps the less said about the dancing the better. The spirit of the old men was certainly willing, but the flesh was very weak—and the partners of the opposite sex were limited to two only, so the "boys" mostly shuffled about with one another—a jerky, gyrating mass of black clothes, white whiskers, and shiny, bald heads.

Thus the days passed.

When we at last sighted the northwest coast of Africa, Captain Morgan—a thin, taciturn individual—crept out of his shell and began to give us fatherly advice. It appeared that he knew almost every inch of the country we intended visiting, and he strongly urged

us to set up the sanatorium for the aged at Windhuk, and to make the Island of Corisco the headquarters of the expedition itself.

As the climate there was more healthy and equable than on the mainland, we changed our plans accordingly and despatched a wireless to Libreville telling Oakley, our air chief, to arrange for the 'planes to be taken over to the island. We also informed the old men that their rendezvous would now be at Windhuk and not the Kalahari.

Six days later we received the businesslike reply:

"*Aerodrome and 'planes ready. Corisco.*" And on the morning of the third day after this we sighted the Promised Land.

All hands and passengers came on deck and let up three mighty cheers.

"Hurrah! . . . . *Hurrah!* . . . . HURRAH!"

Molly was delirious with exitement and Sally Rebecca, who had only just recovered from a long spell of sea-sickness, stood beside her, now and then glancing at Gran'pa's stern, sentinel-like figure standing for'ard in pensive majesty. Even Stringer showed some emotion as that little smudge of dark purple rose above the horizon's edge; and Dr. Croft behaved like a schoolboy and insisted on going up the rigging.

After lunch, our excitement increased. Someone had seen a dark speck hovering over the island, and it was immediately rumored that one of our 'planes was coming out to meet us.

Rumor was right. Against the background of the deep, tropical, blue sky we watched that latest example of man's mastery over Mother Earth. Defiant of the mighty tug of gravitation and the rude thrust of the wind, the great bird came gliding towards our boat, as

straight and steady as an arrow. We approached one another with incredible swiftness—at the combined rate of probably 120 to 150 miles an hour—and, in less than ten minutes from the time we had first sighted it, the machine was looping, banking, swooping and curvetting round us like a thing distraught.

With a deep-throated roar, it would shoot by us on the starboard, proceed half a mile ahead, sweep gracefully round, and then come rushing straight back again at double speed—only to commence vaulting over us when within twenty yards of the bows. Up and up it would go, in a great spluttering spiral. Then silence; and down again, in playful loops and dives and sideslips. It did our hearts good to watch it; but it made our necks ache abominably. . . .

As I watched the old men, the crew, the captain, the doctor, the hypnotist, the interpreter, the ladies (Molly and Sally Rebecca), and Gran'pa, all staring heavenwards and entranced, I could not help feeling a justifiable pride in being the person who had found the incomparable and indomitable Oakley. It was very thoughtful and magnanimous of him to give us such a spectacular welcome. Had we been Cabinet Ministers, *en route* to a naval review, we could not have been treated to a finer display of aerial courtesy and playfulness. It gave me great faith, too, in Oakley's initiative and daring, and intensified my almost painful eagerness to start out on our first flight into the African jungle.

For nearly fifteen minutes, Oakley continued gambolling round our ship and then, with a sudden leap upwards, he passed over us and headed straight for the island.

An hour later we landed, amidst a great hullabaloo of native excitement, shook hands with the Rev.

William Watkins, who had come to welcome us ashore, and thereupon proceeded to his mission station, followed by the half-dozen hefty negroes who were carrying our personal belongings.

"Well!" I said to Oakley. "You got here safely?"

"So—so! Across France and the Mediterranean it was easy going, but North Africa was the devil. We were nearly buffeted to pieces—especially about midday. So, towards the latter end of our flight, we went up only in the mornings and evenings."

"Good! You've picked up plenty of useful knowledge of the air conditions out here?"

"Yes! I don't think we're likely to have much trouble if we start an hour or so before sunrise each day and come back about sunset."

"What's the aerodrome like?"

"Excellent . . . . considering . . . ."

"No illness among the others?"

"Fitter than ever they've been!"

Chatting thus, we came at last to the mission station, which was a cluster of bamboo buildings, consisting of three houses for the whites, a church, a storehouse, a school, several lodging-houses for the children, detached kitchens, and numerous pens for fowl. The whole was surrounded by a hedge of fragrant lime trees, and the cocoanut and mango provided plenty of welcome shade—and fruit!

As a healthy, residential quarter it appeared to be immensely superior to the average suburban street in London. There was certainly no picture palace or public-house round the corner, and our neighbors hardly belonged to the worthy and dignified middle class of England, but in spite of all these drawbacks I liked the place the moment I saw it. It had an air of complete

freedom from all the worry and turmoil of a workaday world; it was restful to tired eyes; and yet it seemed to hold the promise of untold excitements and adventures.

Molly had already made friends with the missionaries and their wives, and Sally Rebecca with a group of fat little native children who clustered round her like a brood of affectionate chickens. It was a pretty picture and reminded me of a film of royalty "slumming"—in the heart of Africa! So I levelled my Kodak at the scene, and snapped it.

Afterwards, we inspected the island, found many beautiful shells on the seashore, watched the fishhawks and eagles swooping down from the rocks on to their finny prey below, feasted our eyes on the bright-feathered parrots and the squirrels, and threw stones at the yellow nuts of the palm.

Then we went back to the ship and bade farewell to its cargo of ancients before they resumed their journey to Swakopmund, *en route* to Windhuk.

"Next time I see you," I said to one melancholy-looking victim, "I hope it'll be with a pocketful of good, powerful glands."

"I trust that will be soon," he mumbled. "I've enjoyed this voyage, but it's nearly been the death of me."

"Oh, you'll be all right as soon as you reach Swakopmund. Anyway, good luck until we meet again."

Thus we went about—Gran'pa, Dr. Croft, Stringer and I—scattering a few words of hope and comfort to the aged of our race.

And, when they had set out to sea again, we wandered homewards to food and a quiet smoke.

"Oakley and I are going out first thing in the morning for a trial flight over the Gorilla country," I said to

Gran'pa, just before we retired. "We want to get the lay of the land—and air."

"That's the spirit, George! No grass growing under your feet, nowadays, eh?"

"Not a blade! I'd go to-night—if we could persuade the sun to reappear."

We wished one another good-night and, after what seemed only a few hours in bed, I was awakened by a nudge from Oakley.

"We're late," he said, "You'll have to bustle."

I sprang out of bed, dressed, and accompanied him to the aerodrome, where in less than another ten minutes we were sitting in the machine ready for our first flight into the Great Unknown.

Watkins, a greasy but competent little man belonging to the new profession of air mechanics, swung the propeller, and the natives held on to the 'planes and tail until the engine was running full out. Then the human anchor was weighed by the natives simply letting go, and the machine began to move slowly forward over the uneven ground.

I had had an idea that we should rise almost immediately, but instead of this the machine seemed to scuttle through the grass as if its wings were too stiff for flight, and it was not until we had nearly reached the end of the aerodrome that the wheels at last left the earth. Even then we were apparently in difficulties, for less than fifty yards away the tops of the cocoanut palms rose above our heads in a threatening barrier of dark green. Could we clear them, I wondered, my heart thumping with excitement?

Suddenly, the machine shot upwards, leapt over the tree tops, dived again on the other side—into what was

fortunately a glade-like clearing in the wood—and then, with a shudder, settled into a steady climb.

As the solid old world sank slowly away from us, I gave a deep sigh of relief and turned my thoughts to the splendid panorama which had now sprung into view. In less than another minute we saw the land beneath us as it actually was—an island, bounded on every side by the silver gray of the sea—while before us lay the great, dull green expanse of the African Continent, fringed at its farthest extremity by the pink to crimson glow of the dawn.

The keen morning air was exhilarating, and the grass and foliage sparkled with diamonds of dew. Never have I seen anything to equal the magnificence of the scenery on this trial flight of ours in Africa. As we passed swiftly over the white shell-strewn beach, backed by its palm groves and native huts and plantations of corn, I experienced a real sense of mastery over Nature. The world on which we little humans so painfully crawl and die became something impersonal—but, at the same time, something surprisingly beautiful. And the sea, as placid as a sheltered, inland pool, had turned into a huge mirror, where a couple of native craft, which were making for the mainland, seemed, to be suspended in the air—so clear was the water, and so still.

Behind us, Corisco, only twelve miles in circumference, was visible as a little self-contained world of hills and valleys, forests and prairies, cliffs and sandy beaches, and even a tiny glass-like lake. Dotted along the shore were the villages, with the smoke from them curling above the tree tops like trailing blue-gray veils.

To the right and left, lay the shores of the beautiful Bay of Corisco, converging gradually into the thin,

silver threads of the River Moondah, which wound its way backwards into the haze of distant verdure.

It was towards this river that we steered a straight course. There was no wind and, except for the vibration of the engines, we travelled smoothly and swiftly, at a gradual incline, until, when we at last reached the mainland, our altimeter registered just over 600 feet.

As we approached the land the machine banked steeply and I watched the altimeter-hand creeping slowly forward—625 . . . 650 . . . 675 . . . up to 1500 feet. Onwards and upwards we raced, while from beneath the horizon's edge, the sun came up to meet us with incredible swiftness and glory. The planes turned to crimson and gold, a new tonic seemed to be added to the air, and a distant chain of mountains suddenly glowed with the fire of dawn.

For fully a minute I could only gaze ahead at the great ball of light. Then I closed my eyes for awhile, and at last looked below.

The river Moondah had entered a vast mangrove swamp and showed itself only here and there as a chain of tiny, disconnected lakes. But 15 to 20 miles away to the right I caught sight of the mighty mouth of the Gaboon—a miniature sea, nearly as large as the Bay of Corisco.

I knew that the upper reaches of this estuary constituted the approximate boundary of the Gorilla Country, and a thrill of expectancy ran through me like cold quicksilver. The salvation of the aged became a matter of minor importance, and in its place there grew an almost bloodthirsty lust for conquest. In spite of our ninety miles an hour the quivering machine seemed to be dragging like lead. The country below

was slipping away from us far too slowly. I wanted to feel myself suddenly leap forward like a hound in the chase. Already, the actual sensation of flight was beginning to lose its spice and the only danger I feared was that of humdrum safety.

As the sun rose, however, the air became more and more bumpy and the banks of clouds lying over the distant Crystal Mountains began to break and scatter. Oakley evidently anticipated a storm, for he commenced climbing again, up and up, to 5,000 feet. At this height it was bitterly cold, but the flying was straight and steady.

We were now passing over the River Gaboon and as I looked to the left I saw that there were bearing down on us from the mountains no less than four distinct storms—each of which consisted of a huge cloud, whence the rain fell in great sheets.

Once more we began climbing, and as one of the storms passed within a quarter of a mile or so of us, the machine was shaken with gusts of wind which seemed to be snatching and tearing at our 'planes like invisible giant hands. Continually rising and dodging as we were, it was impossible to escape wholly from such a turmoil, and twice we passed through the tail end of a storm. As we did so, big heavy rain-drops struck the 'planes and wind screen like a cascade of bullets.

At 8,000 feet we got above a mighty cloud, stretching as far as one could see, and for nearly twenty minutes we flew above this great expanse of dazzling white—so glaringly bright that it made one's eyes and head ache.

And then the engine suddenly stopped, the machine tilted, and a second later we were dropping earthwards

like a stone. Right into the heart of the great cloud we sped, where everything grew dark and the rain beat against the machine in a hurricane of fury. The bumps were terrific and at times it became impossible to say whether we were on our heads or our heels. It was too dark to see, too noisy to think, too exciting even to fear. . . .

We must have been dropping through this black and unholy turmoil for nearly three or four minutes when suddenly it became light again, a great, ragged opening appeared in the cloud, and the green earth slid up swiftly to meet us.

In the glare of the sun I saw Oakley making a last effort to save us; but I knew it was hopeless. I held my breath, waited for the crash, and then let forth a loud cry of joy—for with a last and almost human effort the machine gave a lurch, flattened out and gracefully glided to earth. After a spinning, nose-diving and side-slipping career of over 8,000 feet we had alighted as gently as if our whole object had been to disturb not even a blade of grass.

"Well!" I cried to Oakley. "We seem to have landed all right. But, where?"

He unfastened his belt, alighted, wiped his forehead, and said:

"God knows! It's earth—good, solid earth. And that's all that matters for the moment."

I clambered down on this comforting bit of green *terra firma* and looked heavenwards at the tail end of the departing cloud in which we had spent that agonizing eternity of unrest.

"My godfather's trousers!" exclaimed Oakley. "I dunno how we scraped through!"

"I don't know how *you* did! All I could do was to sit tight and wait for the thud."

"And I waited for the light—then shoved the nose up and trusted to luck. . . .This looks like a sort of clearing in the middle of a forest."

I made a cursory inspection of the aerodrome which Mother Nature had so thoughtfully provided for us, and saw that we were hemmed in on all sides by giant trees and dense and gloomy foliage. The sunlight fell on us slantwise, like limelight on a stage—as dramatic a setting as one could desire for a first landing in a new country. The earth beneath us was wet, but firm and even, a spot probably never before trodden by the foot of man. I felt immensely important—and yet terribly little the moment I looked upwards at that silent, *watching* ring of trees.

I use the word "watching," because I could not dispel the conviction that unseen eyes followed our every movement. Oakley must have felt it, too, for neither of us spoke. We looked—and, as we did so, we slipped the revolvers from our belts. The touch of the cool butt was comforting. It just saved me from panic and gave me back my manhood. After all, were we not Lords of Creation, even in this desolate place? We had the means of defence, the means of escape, and the brains to utilize both. I reasoned all this out swiftly, and gradually the thumping in my chest subsided and I became calmer. In spite of this my hand shook and I saw that Oakley had noticed it.

"Nerves!" I said to him. "How're yours?"

"Rotten! I'd much rather be up in that hell in the heavens again!. . . .*What's that?*"

Behind me, there was a sudden noise as of someone

breaking twigs and branches—a stealthy and steady crackle of splitting wood.

We swung round in the direction of the sound and I saw the underbrush sway and part.

A second later there appeared an immense gorilla on all fours. The moment he caught sight of us he stood erect and stared malevolently in our faces—the most unforgettably ferocious brute it is possible to imagine.

The trivial encounters with gorillas in England paled into nothingness compared with this, for the animal was less than a dozen yards away. Quite six feet in height, with immense body, grotesquely inflated chest and huge muscular arms, he stood before us as the indisputable monarch of the African jungle.

He showed not the least trace of fear, but immediately let forth roar upon roar of defiance and hate.

A cold sweat broke out over my whole body, followed by a paralyzing sensation of sickness. All the blind brutality of Nature "red in tooth and claw," all its vindictiveness, all its strength and cunning, seemed to be centred in that dreadful cry, which began as a sharp bark and glided swiftly into a deep roll. It came up in great gusts of rage from the brute's chest like the sound of distant thunder. Then it shut off as suddenly as it began.

Oakley and I stood in horrified silence, literally unable to move, and the beast advanced a few steps—then stopped to emit that hideous roar—advanced again, and finally halted at a distance of some half-dozen yards from us. A crest of short hair on its forehead was twitching rapidly up and down, and its powerful fangs were bared, and glistening white in the sunshine. It was a repulsive and thrilling exhibition of stark

animal brutality, and yet in some strange way it no longer filled me with fear. The attitude of the beast, menacing as it was, seemed to be too humanly blustering, too exaggerated, too "stagey."

But when it began advancing again, a real panic seized me, I stepped swiftly back, pointed my revolver point blank at the animal's huge chest and cried a warning to Oakley. As my forefinger closed over the trigger of the automatic, it seemed to require every scrap of my strength to exert the necessary pressure. There was a sharp double crack as Oakley and I fired almost simultaneously, then two more in quick succession from my own revolver, and a deep groan which had something terribly human in it.

The gorilla had fallen face forward on the grass, where it was twitching convulsively, and a minute later it was dead.

If ever a man felt like a murderer I did.

"By my godfather's. . . . ." breathed Oakley, "that was a thundering near thing. Why didn't you fire before?"

"Why didn't *you?*" I gasped.

"I couldn't!"

"Neither could I. I had to be driven to it by sheer desperation and danger. I don't like the look of the brute; it's too human. Let's get away again, before its brothers and cousins arrive. We're out here to catch 'em, not kill 'em, and I don't want any more blood on my hands to-day."

Oakley gave a short, high-strung laugh, and without further delay crossed over to the machine.

After a quarter of an hour's examination he made some startling discovery which he tried to explain to me in the usual technical jargon.

"What's the cause?" I asked, trying to sound intelligent.

"Can't think—and, anyway, it's no use puzzling it out now. I've managed to put it right and so we'd better get away before another storm comes."

He clambered into the pilot's seat. I swung the propeller, dashed after the slowly moving machine, ducked and dodged, tried to scramble aboard, failed—and fell. . . .

When I had collected my senses again and stumbled to my feet, the machine was gracefully gliding into the air. Shouting and waving my arms, I tried to attract Oakley's attention, but without the least effect. Up and up went the machine, then it suddenly dipped from view, and I was alone with that dead and evil-looking gorilla and the great encircling jungle.

What had happened? Had Oakley crashed, or had he landed again in the hope that I would follow? Or was he continuing his flight under the impression that I was safely aboard? I kept very still, and listened; but there was not the faintest sound of the engine still running. The world was terribly and cruelly silent. Once, I caught the sharp crack of some twig, as if life was moving in the depths of the forest, and I clutched my revolver and backed into the middle of the grass arena. I also heard a deep and distant roll of anger, followed by a series of staccato barks, which I instantly recognised as the cry of the gorilla.

"Where in heaven's name is Oakley?" clamored my mind, a little hysterically

A shrill squeal from the tree tops on my right was the only answer and, as I swung round with raised revolver, I caught sight of a small brown body dropping swiftly from branch to branch. The temptation to

try a sporting shot was great, but reason prevailed and I lowered my hand. Cartridges were too valuable to waste on mere monkeys. . . .

For nearly a quarter of an hour, this nerve torture continued. Everywhere seemed to be hidden and malignant forms of life, crying warnings to one another, or hurling threats at me! Then they were suddenly drowned in the deep and magnificent roar of our aeroplane as it came gliding over the tree tops again in search of its lost passenger.

"Hey!" I cried, frantically waving my cap.

The great bird spluttered, abruptly became silent, circled round twice, and gracefully slid to earth.

"Lord!" I exclaimed, as I ran up to Oakley. "I thought you'd forgotten me!"

"I couldn't look round for the first three or four minutes," he said. "Too busy! These trees are a damned nuisance and the air's like a cauldron."

Without wasting further time in talking, we backed the machine to one corner of the "aerodrome," started the engine and, this time, got away with both of us safely aboard.

An hour later we were back in Corisco telling Gran'pa of our first encounter with a wild gorilla.

"It's a great pity you had to shoot it, George," he said.

"If I hadn't, neither of us would have been here now!" I exclaimed, irritably.

"Oh, I'm not complaining. But we shall have to be careful not to let it occur again. These brutes must be taken alive—or not at all. I suppose you couldn't have frightened it away?"

"Yes!" I breathed. "As easily as you could scare off an elephant with a pop-gun."

"H'm!. . . . Well, tomorrow we must get to work on that portable cage. It's no use going out again until we are properly prepared and can rely on making a capture. By the way, while you were away Stringer has been busy hypnotizing half-a-dozen blacks. He said very little to them; but his gaze seemed to work wonders. They behaved like docile children."

"Did they? I wish we'd taken him with us today," I answered, still incensed at the casual way Gran'pa had treated our escape. "He might have put the 'fluence' on that gorilla and persuaded the brute to swing the propellor when we were safely aboard. I'm beginning to think, however, that the only effective weapon against these gentlemen of the jungle will be hand grenades."

But I spoke, as so many of us do, without knowledge of what the future had in store. I suppose that it is natural for every pioneer to have his moments of doubt and anxiety.

CHAPTER XII

IN THE JUNGLE

OUR trial flight to Gorilla-land and back having been successfully accomplished, we now began earnest preparations for the wholesale capture of its inhabitants.

With his usual businesslike grasp of details, Gran'pa drew up a list of the most important of our tasks, which were briefly as follows:—

(*a*) Construction of three cages (in sections); transportation to suitable spots in jungle; erection; camouflage.

(*b*) Construction and transportation of two hangars.

(*c*) Transportation of two gas cylinders per cage.

(*d*) Lessons in language and habits of gorilla.

(*e*) Lessons in rapid binding with ropes, tying knots, etc.

One would have said that, fired with the great enthusiasm we all had for the cause, such tasks as those outlined above should have taken us only a few weeks to accomplish. They should. We had no trade union restrictions, no lack of labor, no shortage of material, and no fear of overproduction. Free from all these handicaps so carefully cultivated by the Spirit of Modern Democracy, we ought to have made rapid progress.

But the natives were lazy, and argumentative, and curious, and superstitious; the climate was abominably hot, and wet, and enervating; transportation by aeroplane through a bumpy and tempestuous medium was difficult, and dangerous, and very trying to the nerves;

and the general negroid disposition of always putting off till to-morrow what you should do to-day was contagiously demoralizing even to the best of us (Gran'pa!). All these things, added together, grew into a sort of huge persuasive influence which insisted that labor was undignified and crude.

Like a modern epitome of the British working man, I began reasoning with myself thus: Why should I slave for others (that is, for eighty-seven doddering old men on their way to Windhuk and Eternal Youth)? Why should I toil my hardest, while a life of dignified ease was the lot of so many others (that is, of the black population of Corisco)? Why should I risk my life, or rack my brains, or endanger my health? In short: why worry? Why hustle? And what was it all for, in the end? And who cared? And, so on....

This frame of mind was apparently common to all of us. We sometimes caught one another lolling about in obscure and shady spots; or swimming in the cool green water of miniature harbors; or even fast asleep in corners of buildings, which were primarily designed and set apart for human industry. Naturally, the individual who was found in these attitudes of dignified repose or gentle relaxation was admonished by the discoverer, but the latter always knew that he was just as bad himself—when a suitable opportunity arose.

The climax came, however, one morning when I had been working unusually hard at finishing the last of the three cages. As I hammered home the final rivet I gave a great sigh of relief.

"That's *that!*" I thought, flinging the hammer aside and strolling out into the tropical sunshine. "Now I'll pop over to the aerodrome, and see how they're getting on."

Gran'pa, Dr. Croft and Stringer were there (in

charge of one another and some half-dozen natives), and I was anxious to let them know the result of my morning's labors. It was intensely hot, and as I strolled languidly through the mango plantation, I felt a grim satisfaction in my physical condition of perspiring stickiness.

When I entered the large bamboo building which constituted our workshop and aero garage I was immediately struck by its air of peace and solitude. The portable lathe was silent and the benches were littered with deserted tools, as though everyone had left hurriedly.

At first, the feverish pictures of a negro revolt, anarchy, or assassination flashed through my brain; but presently, it became obvious that nothing was damaged or taken. The place had been simply left—as though it was under the spell of a dinner hour, or the Sabbath. A terrible thought seized me, and hurrying into the open again I began a search of the immediate vicinity, in the hope of finding some loitering negro who could tell me what had happened to the toilers.

Not a soul was in sight. The countryside seemed to have been suddenly swept clean of all life and movement; but, standing still and listening, I at last heard a faint and distant sound of cheering. It came unmistakably from the direction of the seashore. So I moved forward again, worked my way down a narrow cliff pathway and thence emerged on to a stretch of yellow sand. The noise—of much splashing and shouting—was now on my right, but the cause of the commotion was hidden by a handful of giant boulders which Nature had playfully flung down at this spot.

After a ten minute search for footholds, I managed to climb to the top of the highest boulder; and suddenly

I saw a scene which nearly made me weep at the futility of man's endeavor. There had I been working hard all the morning, and here were Gran'pa, Croft, and Stringer —naked and unashamed—careering round a miniature harbor on some crudely fashioned raft-like object which was driven apparently by a petrol engine.

As the thing drew nearer to me I could see that it was preceded by a huge curling wave, which was made by some fiendish contrivance to fling itself over the heads and bodies of the three mariners. Every now and then, Gran'pa tugged at a piece of rope astern and the whole craft leapt half out of the water, dived, and then settled down into a sort of erratic seesaw movement. The cliff tops and beach were dotted with excited negroes, and each time Gran'pa pulled the rope they broke into loud cheers and flung themselves about in an ecstasy of wild abandonment.

As I watched, I visualized that terrible business of Gran'pa and the dug-out at home in England, and I could see that he was as wilful as ever. To think that I had been working myself to a shadow in this infernal tropical heat while he and Croft and Stringer were disporting themselves in this aquatic and hysterical fashion!

I stood up on the boulder top and waved my arms and shouted. The only answer was a loud and unanimous whoop of joy from the negroes, who no doubt thought that I had joined them as another enthusiastic spectator.

Presently, however, the craft turned round and began heading in my direction. As it did so, two of the crew were precipitated into the water, where they commenced behaving like hilarious porpoises. The man still left in charge of the thing was (naturally) Gran'pa, who con-

tinued serenely onwards until he finally ran aground on a kind of quayside composed of rugged, flat-topped rocks which jutted out into the sea like a pier.

It was at this point that I went out to meet him—and tell him exactly what was in my mind.

"Come on, George!" he shouted "Off with your clothes!"

The temptation was terrible; but I had to remember my dignity.

"I'm ashamed of you!" I said, gazing at his cool, sea-drenched body and laughing face.

"What's the matter now?"

"I naturally concluded that you were all busy at work—the same as me. How the blazes do you expect us to get this job done if you behave in this demoralizing way?"

"Ah! This is a brain-wave. Dr. Croft and I thought it out this morning and acted on it there and then."

"" So I can gather, quite easily!"

Gran'pa turned off the engine and stepped ashore.

"Those damned natives are getting sick of work," he said. "This morning they were worse than ever. We offered 'em more cheap and nasty jewelry. But they've lost interest in it. They're overloaded with the stuff. So we cudgelled our brains, and this is the result. At heart they're little children. What they want is enjoyment, not gimcrack knickknacks. This little exhibition of aquatic merriment has turned their heads. Look at them!....They'd give anything for a joy-ride on this. See the idea?"

"You mean that excursions on this horrible contrivance will be their reward for industry?"

"You've hit it first time, my lad. For every day of good hard, honest toil they'll get fifteen minutes' excitement round the harbor. And I'll stake my last farthing that when they know, we shall be simply besieged with applicants for jobs."

I began divesting myself of my unnecessary and encumbering garments.

"You're a genius!" I said, as I scrambled aboard. "Let her rip!"

The contrivance on which I managed to secure a perilous foothold was a rough, heart-shaped raft, with a long, narrow, rectangular hole cut between the bows. It was through this hole that the water presently began shooting upwards and backwards in a deliciously cool spray. The engine—taken from an old petrol launch which Gran'pa had bought a few days previously at Libreville—was encased in a water-tight covering made of aeroplane fabric stretched over a metal framework. Between this and the rudder was a vertical board which could be alternately lowered into and raised out of the water, this giving our craft the motion of a greyhound leaping in the chase. One maintained (or tried to maintain) one's balance by standing with the feet well apart and clutching a couple of the half dozen ropes fastened at one end to the deck.

Bathed in sunshine and falling water, Gran'pa and I shot outwards into the little blue bay, where he began frisking and seesawing, to the immense enjoyment of ourselves and the spectators. They lined the beach in hundreds, and shouted themselves hoarse with glee (and envy!).

"Like it, George?" cried Gran'pa, as we playfully leapt half out of the water.

"Rather! Why even I would do a day's work for a joy-ride like this every afternoon!"

We slowed down and picked up Croft and Stringer. But with four of us aboard the thing became top-heavy and cumbersome. So we made for land.

There, Gran'pa explained to the crowding and excited negroes the new system of payment for labor; and, as a proof of good faith (and an advertisement), he took our black foreman for a little jaunt round the harbor.

Ten minutes later the poor fellow came back absolutely delirious with joy.

Thus did we solve the great labor question in Corisco....

It proved more satisfactory to our employees than any system of profit-sharing, coöperation, or payment by result ever devised, and it was certainly cheaper for the employer. The work was now done so thoroughly and speedily that in less than another week we were ready for our first real invasion of the jungle.

We all knew the gorilla language by now—a matter of some twenty or more sounds—were experts at knot-tying and rope-binding, and could give a very passable imitation of a live gorilla (when we were suitably clad in one of the animal's skins and a mask). Our skill in making a gas attack unawares was so perfect that we had even experimented on some of the natives without their having had the faintest idea of why they had suddenly fallen asleep. (I should like to give the exact formula for this specially prepared gas, which we called *Gorilene,* but unfortunately Gran'pa would never divulge the secret. It was practically odorless and non-poisonous, and its effect was swift and painless, rendering its victim unconscious for about 60 to 90 seconds.)

We could also fly an aeroplane or shoot an animal at 100 yards; and in an emergency we could climb trees with grace and agility. We had even been taught how to do interesting and murderous things with knives and spears. . . .

In addition, we could all of us (including Molly and Sally Rebecca) carry on more or less intelligent conversations with the natives in pigeon-English (with the occasional help of an excellent German-made dictionary!). At swimming we were experts and almost "lived" our spare time in the water; with the exception of Sally Rebecca, who could be persuaded only to paddle. Even this she first attempted with stockings on! But, as for Molly, I really believe that she would have developed fins and web-feet in another six months! She was brown skinned from head to foot, and constant exercise in the open air and sunshine had already increased her stature by at least an inch. We were the jolliest party imaginable, and I am certain that all of us hated the prospect of ever returning to England.

I mention these things to show that, in spite of our deep sense of duty towards the aged, we still had our lighter moments of gaiety and abandon.

At last the time came when we were able to make the actual declaration of war on the gorillas. Our boat, "The Pilgrim Father," after landing its cargo of ancients at Swakopmund, had returned and had been prepared for the reception of our anthropoid guests; the three cages had been placed in the jungle, some 150 miles from Corisco (their exact positions being indicated by small, bright-red, captive balloons); a hangar for the shelter of two aeroplanes had been constructed on a neighboring plateau; and a week's supply of emergency

rations had been conveyed to each of these four points of attack (and defence). We were ready.

Ninety minutes before dawn on May 15th (the commencement of the six months' dry season) was the appointed hour to strike.

I don't think any of us slept the previous night. We arose early, fed ourselves, wheeled out the two aeroplanes, climbed aboard, and wished everyone "good-by"—although we intended returning the same evening, if possible. I leant over the side and kissed Molly, and Gran'pa kissed Sally Rebecca (who didn't look a day older than sixty in the faint light of the early morn); and Stringer and Dr. Croft and the two pilots waved to the assembled multitude. Immediately afterwards our propellers were swung and we rose into the air like two great birds in quest of other and pleasanter climes.

As was fitting, the leading 'plane contained Gran'pa, Stringer and Oakley—Dr. Croft and myself and Newland (one of our other pilots) followed behind at a distance of about five hundred feet. We also had our mascots aboard. Mine was a small teddy bear (2 inches in height) given me by Molly; Croft's was a human knuckle bone (previously belonging to some ancient, mummified Egyptian princess); Stringer's was a carved crocodile's tooth (given him, possibly under hypnotic influence, by Njambai, the Mbenga chief); Oakley's and Newland's were a couple of green wool, miniature golliwogs; and Gran'pa's was a small photograph of Sally Rebecca (at the age of 32)—a thing of art and beauty and sentiment, perhaps, but obviously of very little value, otherwise.

We flew across the Bay of Corisco at a height of about 1,500 feet, making straight for the mouth of the

Moondah, which glistened like the head of an arrow pointing towards the heart of the Gorilla Country. The air was icy cold, and clear; but by the time the sun had risen and we had crossed the Coast Range we found the way blocked by a long bank of clouds. To save time, we flew through the gaps, which, as we entered them, became huge caves. By towering cliffs and over deep chasms we passed—aflight in another world, which was every bit as solid-looking as the real one lying sunlit and green-clad beneath.

It was after passing through the last of these cloud gaps that we saw half-a-dozen miles to our right—three patches of bright red, standing out like tiny, clear-cut discs on the olive green expanse of jungle. They were the balloons which gave us the exact location of our cages. A little further on, the top of our hangar was visible as a blob of white in the one corner of a light green clearing.

Presently, Newland pulled back the throttle and pushed the joy-stick forward and we descended swiftly to a height of 1,000 feet. At that point he shut off the engine; the deep roar, which we had grown accustomed to for the last two and a half hours, was changed into the shrill whine of wind against the struts; the aeroplane flattened out, and we at last commenced our swift glide earthwards.

We landed a couple of minutes or so after our leaders, and immediately began making arrangements for our journey to the cages.

A dozen negroes from one of the neighboring tribes had been left in charge of the aerodrome for the last week, and from these we now chose six as our personal bodyguard through the jungle. Fine fellows they were—tall, powerfully built, industrious (more or less) and

very willing and obedient (as becomes the properly missionarified black). They treated us with idolatrous respect, chattered excitably of the gorillas they had heard in the vicinity, and told us that the narrow pathways which they had cut to our cages were in complete readiness.

Leaving Oakley and Newland and the remainder of the negroes at the aerodrome, we soon reached the first cage, which was about a quarter of a mile away. There Stringer and I pitched camp for the day, retaining one-third of the bodyguard for porter work.

"If you have any luck," I said to Gran'pa and Dr. Croft, "send a messenger along. The first capture will probably be the most important of all. To-day is a sort of apprenticeship."

"Quite right, George! Much depends on our initial encounter with a free gorilla and whoever scores the first bull's-eye should hand on the valuable knowledge he has thereby acquired. . . .So long!"

Stringer and I watched them disappear into the dense green mass of the encircling jungle, and then entered our fortress and donned our female gorilla garments. We saw that our revolvers were loaded and efficient, slipped them into the "hip pockets" cut in the rear of the skins, and turned out attention to the "gas-works." A flexible green tube (artfully disguised as a trailing tendril!) was affixed to each of the two cylinders and one nozzle was placed outside and the other inside the cage. Ropes, handcuffs, and chains were also placed in readiness.

While we were thus engaged none of us spoke above the merest whisper, and the negroes themselves moved as silently as shadows. To a spectator, we should have presented a strange sight indeed. He would have seen a

small, natural clearing in the jungle and a peculiar, leaf-bedecked arrangement of vertical green bars, behind which two negroes and (apparently) two gorillas were working in perfect harmony and peace. He would also have smelt a strong odor of aniseed (beloved of all animals), and, so we hoped, a reliable camouflage to our tell-tale "man-scent." Then he would have seen the centre portion of the bars slide apart and one of the gorillas emerge into the open and emit weird cries. At this point such a spectator would probably have fled (or fired!). . . .

The interior of the cage was painted a dull black, so that from the outside everything behind the bars was, as it were, in deep shadows, the negroes themselves being almost invisible. (Yes! We had thought of everything!)

When Stringer stepped out of our shelter and gave vent to that inhuman call signifying " food and plenty," I held my breath and listened. The air was hot, heavy, damp and oppressive—an almost tangible medium in which we were immersed from the throat downwards. Animal and insect life was silent and deathlike, but from the moisture-laden, luxurious foliage came the subdued murmur of at least one form of movement.

Drip!. . . .Drip!. . . .Drip!. . . .

As Stringer cautiously advanced, he carried in his left hand that sleep-inducing nozzle connected with the gas cylinder; whilst in his right hand he held a death-inducing automatic—in case there arose the vital question: " My life or yours? "

At a distance of twenty or thirty feet from the cage he sat down on his haunches, raised his great anthropoid head to heaven, and let forth another and louder cry.

There was no answer, save that eternal and infernal: *Drip!....Drip!....Drip!....*

A giant tree shook itself in a slight breeze which sprang up, and I saw a snake make its way stealthily across one corner of the clearing and disappear into the underbrush.

Silence and stillness again.

And then an answering call came from the depths of the jungle. Like a cry of some triumphant and bloodthirsty accomplishment, it rose slowly upwards and upwards until it reached a pæan of ecstacy and abandonment; then it sank into a low gurgle of animal contentment.

Was it Gran'pa, or Dr. Croft, or another gorilla?

Stringer turned his head and looked at me in a way which, in spite of his anthropoid appearance, was almost human. No doubt he was asking himself (and me), the same question.

I shook my shaggy head and waddled out into the open. There, I emitted a cry very similar to the one that we had just heard.

It was answered almost immediately, from two separate points in succession, and I knew at once that Gran'pa and Dr. Croft were now engaged in the same occupation as ourselves and that they were notifying us of the fact.

Presently, we heard and sensed the vague stir of animal life. Birds alighted on near-by trees; distant and hidden twigs and branches cracked; a little curious-visaged monkey appeared on a tree-top and watched us alertly; a brilliantly colored parrot shrieked and whistled. The denizens of the forest were at last emerging from that temporary retirement occasioned by the advent of our party from the outside world. With

only a couple of playful-looking gorillas in sight, they were no doubt feeling quite at home again.

When we gave vent to our ardent appeals for the companionship of our tribe, the sounds of busy life around us continued with unabated industry—a great compliment to our power of imitative animal articulation. We, and our cage, and the statuesque negroes in the two back corners, were definitely part and parcel of the jungle. We were being accepted by its folk, sheltered by its encompassing vegetation, and warmed and moistened by its atmosphere. So acclimatized did I feel that I ventured further out into the open and joined Stringer.

"There doesn't seem to be anything doing yet," I whispered in civilized, human slang.

"It's a game of patience. We may have to wait hours or even days. We'll bring a book to read to-morrow."

"Might frighten them."

"Not if you kept it well out of sight in this long grass."

"Yes!....We could take it in turns. It would never do for both of us to get absorbed in a yarn. One would have to watch while the other read."

At this point our conversation suddenly ceased. We had heard the sharp crack of breaking twigs in some spot immediately behind us.

Turning swiftly but cautiously, we peered at the dense green tangle of leaves and branches, trying to make our gaze penetrate into the gloomy interior of the forest.

With great presence of mind, Stringer also began making little whimpering and seductives noises at the back of his throat, like a female gorilla in distress.

The noise stopped and I was conscious—with every

high-strung nerve in my body!—that we were being watched. Was it with curiosity, with malicious intent, or with fear? And by *what?* Had the fateful hour at last struck? Were all our plans and preparations for the previous six months now to be put to the great test? Were we facing victory, or defeat—or death?

As these thoughts sped through my mind I became aware of a feeling of intense exhilaration. I was eager to see what stark and naked peril lay behind the shelter of those harmless trees and bushes. To have advanced towards the spot with the intention of making closer investigations would have been foolish. It might frighten away our unseen watcher, or lead to a sudden attack which would take us unawares.

So Stringer and I commenced slowly waddling back to our cage, with gas nozzles and revolvers in readiness for instant use. As we moved, we made a pretence of eating the plentiful supply of nuts and white-ribbed pineapple leaves which we had brought with us. At the same time we emitted alluring noises signifying "food." Surely no *male* gorilla, at any rate, would be able to resist this joint attraction of food and mates!

We were mistaken, however, for presently we heard faint and stealthy movements of retreat and a few moments later our ears were listening to only the constant: *Drip!....Drip!....Drip....* of the jungle.

"Damn!" I whispered to Stringer.

"Don't worry!" he said. "If it's a gorilla I'll bet its curiosity will get the better of it presently and it'll return to another spot. If it is *not* a gorilla—then we've lost nothing!"

"True!"

I let forth another call and heard Gran'pa and Dr.

Croft give their answering cries as if in mocking derision at our first failure.

"It may go ambling off to *their* cages," I whispered, in a spirit of intense rivalry.

"Just as good," answered Stringer.

"It isn't! *We* want to score the first victory."

Again we called to our kinsmen of the forest; and this time our efforts were rewarded with astonishing success.

Without the least sound or warning, the branches of the surrounding trees suddenly parted at two places at once, and there emerged into the open a couple of huge male gorillas on all fours.

They stopped, stared first at us, and then at one another.

"Rivals for our hands—by jingo!" whispered Stringer, with a nervous attempt at humor.

"I hope to goodness they don't fight!" I answered.

For fully a minute they sat there on their haunches, supporting themselves with their long arms and glaring at each other with hatred, but indecision.

Suddenly the larger one arose and commenced moving slowly in our direction, using its arms as sort of crutches. It looked Stringer straight in the face, and Stringer returned the gaze with all the unwavering calmness of his magnetic soul!

The other brute also began waddling towards us and, as it did so, the first turned its head, struck its immense chest with its hands and let forth roar upon roar of defiance. It bared its teeth, rapidly oscillated its eyebrows, and assumed the most threatening attitude it could command.

Its smaller rival hesitated—as well it might—then

it looked covetously in my direction and I could see from the way it eyed me that it was not going to be intimidated in this manner. I adopted an air of complete indifference and went on pretending to eat my pine-apple leaves. Whether it was the tasty food or me it wanted I would not be conceited enough to say; but, anyway, it decided to fight.

With a sharp bark and a roar like thunder the two gorillas were upon one another in an instant.

The sight was magnificent, but awful. The great, muscular brutes tore at each other's throats with their hands (and even their feet); they twisted and turned and contorted themselves; they bit; they scratched; and they screamed out their hatred in every key conceivable. The brutality of two men fighting to the death was a mere, friendly sparring match compared with this. Tney fought without conforming to any rules of sport, without mercy, and without respite. Pieces of hairy skin were torn off by tooth and claw; arms and legs were wrenched and twisted to breaking point; heads were thrust back in an endeavor to get at the throat; and bodies were lacerated with pieces of broken wood as the two infuriated and interlocked monsters flung themselves hither and thither on the earth.

Once, their powerful, wide-open jaws met one against the other in a hideous clash and something white and glistening flew out on to the grass. It was a broken tooth! The strength they were exerting must have been tremendous—sufficient to crush a man to jelly—and yet neither seemed able to gain any decisive advantage over the other.

For nearly a couple of minutes we watched with horror and fascination this deadly combat between two

of the cruellest and most vindictive brutes in the whole of the animal world. We could do nothing but stare breathlessly at the scene, and thank God that we were not actively involved as well.

At last, however, one of us spoke.

"We must stop this," whispered Stringer, hoarsely. "They'll kill each other."

"What can we do—except shoot?"

"There's....*this!*" he answered quietly. "If we can get near enough."

He held up the nozzle of the gas projector.

"By jove!" I said. "Of course!"

I gave the prearranged sign to the two scared negroes crouching in the cage and they turned on the cocks of the cylinders.

As the gas began sizzling out of the flexible tubes, we fixed over our nostrils the breathing apparatus connected with the filters which we carried on our backs.

Then we advanced stealthily towards the gyrating mass of animal fury and played on it.

The miraculous happened. Gradually, the monsters relinquished their stranglehold. It was as if sudden exhaustion had seized them. They sat down on their haunches, like two worn-out old men, panting for breath, dazed and clearly very surprised.

One of them made a whimpering noise, opened its mouth in a vain endeavor to escape the suffocating effects of the gas, passed its arm wearily across its face as if to wipe something away—and suddenly collapsed.

The other attempted to escape. But its legs and arms were too weak to propel its great body and a moment or so later it, too, lay down with a deep grunt of contentment.

I shouted to the negroes—shouted at the top of my voice in modern English:

"Hustle, there!"

They understood.

Without a second's delay they came running out to us with all the paraphernalia of bondage—ropes, chains, handcuffs, and sacks.

I gave Stringer my gas projector, asked him to keep the two brutes quiet while I fetched the ether, and told the negroes to hold their breath until they had dropped their burden and retreated again.

For the next five minutes we were four of the busiest people on earth. We substituted ether for gas, got the gorillas into a nice pliable condition of utter unconsciousness, handcuffed their hands behind their backs, tied up their legs in sacks, wound their arms and bodies round and round with ropes and chains, and then withdrew to our cage, where we took a cool and refreshing draught of lime-juice and water.

The perspiration was running from us. The gorilla is an immense brute weighing from two hundred to two hundred and fifty pounds, and the trussing up of that amount of dead weight in the damp tropical heat had demanded tremendous exertions. Even the great six-foot negroes looked exhausted.

"Well!" I said to Stringer, "how's that for the first morning's bag?"

"Great! Won't the others be jealous!"

"Won't they just! We'll send them word at once."

I despatched the two blacks with our message of victory, turned to the wire which held our balloon captive, hauled down the bright red ball to earth, fastened the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack beneath it, and let it up into the air again. This was our simple method of

requesting Oakley and Newland to send carriers from the aerodrome.

"Now," I said, "let's go and inspect the vanquished!"

They lay there on the green grass as peaceful as little children asleep in their cots, and to look at them lying thus it was difficult to imagine that they were the same two beings that less than ten minutes previously, had been locked in deadly combat.

Their coats were of an iron-gray color, due to alternate rings of black and gray on the individual hairs—which were quite two inches long on the arms. The skin was black and naked on the face, the breast and the palms of the hands; the head was covered in short, reddish brown hair; the eyes were deeply sunken, and lay beneath overhanging ridges of bone, which gave the face an expression of scowling savagery; and the wide mouthwas fringed by sharply-cut lips which were drawn back so as to expose the huge and powerful canines.

In spite of the ferocity of their recent encounter, they were practically undamaged, excepting for a few skin wounds and contusions. We anointed several wounds with carbolic ointment, removed a particle of broken wood which was embedded in the smaller gorilla's thigh, propped the two brutes up against a couple of tree trunks, and then stepped back and awaited their return to consciousness.

Stringer's suitor awoke first. He was in such a position that he could see us, but not his rival, and no doubt his first impression was that he had won the fight—but had naturally been left very bruised and exhausted. He looked at Stringer and me with what was very nearly an expression of quiet triumph and he seemed to invite our approach.

We spoke to him soothingly, trying to convey to his numbed brain that all danger was over and that prosperity (in the shape of food) lay before us all.

He listened intelligently, gave a little grunt of satisfaction and tried to join us.

The sudden realization that it was impossible to move any part of himself save his head must have proved a terrible shock. We saw him inflate his immense chest to its fullest capacity, strain at his bonds, and then relax into a condition of panting impotence.

By this time, my own suitor had regained consciousness and was also endeavoring to reach us.

Neither of them showed the least trace of anger or fear—a remarkable fact when one considers their position of helpless bondage Had they seen each other, the situation would no doubt have developed into another display of tempestuous fury, but, as it was, they made no sound other than that of labored breathing. Possibly, they had experienced this feeling of returning consciousness and helplessness before, and were convinced that it would presently pass off. It was one of the symbols of victory.

I put my mouth to Stringer's ear and whispered:

"Let's get nearer and see if they still suffer from the delusion that we are of the same blood."

Apparently they did; and Stringer actually had the temerity to reach out a hairy arm and stroke his gorilla on the head. The poor brute shut its eyes in mild contentment.

Could anything have been more pitiably human than this great monster succumbing to such a kindly caress? Were not all those stories of the untamable ferocity of the male gorilla merely due to ignorance and superstition? Were these animals any more malignant and

savage than we should be, had we to face the same daily perils of life in the jungle?

I recalled Gran'pa's display of murderous intent on that terrible night when I had tried to coax him from his dug-out into the warm shelter of a house, and I could see that external conditions accounted for a great deal, even in human conduct. How much more so must this have been the case with animals.

Here were these two poor, misguided brutes, shattered and dazed by recent battle, asking for comfort and kindness, and when it was administered to them (by the women of their own species!) they became as little children. It was a touching sight, and I was so pleased with Stringer's achievement that I could not refrain from leaning forward to stroke my own captive.

But the brute was suspicious (smelling beneath the aniseed, perhaps, a whiff of that hate-inducing scent of MAN), and it suddenly showed its ill-temper in a quick jerk of the head, a clash of white teeth and a guttural snarl. The fingers of my right hand were saved by less than an inch and the tenth of a second.

"You would, would you?" I said, completely forgetting my anthropoid part.

At the sound of my human voice it barked again, and as it did so, Stringer's gorilla twisted its head round, saw its rival still in the land of the living, and let up a terrible, rolling roar of defiance.

Pandemonium broke loose again. The two animals screamed and barked and roared at one another as if they were mad—each probably under the impression that the other was responsible for the ropes and chains of bondage. They strained and twisted at their shackles until I began to fear that they would break. I could have sworn that I heard something snap.

And so I had; for at the opposite side of the clearing an immense gorilla was standing, erect and uncertain, clutching in its hands the broken and leafless bough of a tree.

"Look out!" I warned Stringer.

He swung round in the direction I pointed, and for one awful half-minute there was a dead silence, as the whole five of us stood watching one another for the first sign of attack.

Revolvers in hand, Stringer and I came together and commenced backing towards the cage. But before we could reach it, the newcomer was after us on all fours—running along the ground like a bent old man, with incredible speed and ungainliness.

We didn't wait the hundredth part of a second. Nor, thank heaven, did we fire. I don't believe we could have hit the brute had we tried.

We simply turned, rushed pell mell for our shelter, scrambled inside, slammed the trap doors to, and retreated to the farthest corner.

With an ear-splitting roar, the monster flung itself at the bars, bending them and shaking the whole cage with the force of its impact.

"Quick!" I cried. "Turn on that blooming gas!"

There was no time to bother about gas masks. I picked up the nearest tube, held my breath, and thrust the projector right between the hideous brute's open jaws.

They came together with a horrible crunch, there was a choking splutter of rage, and a moment later the poor wretch had followed its predecessors' swift flight to the realms of sleep. Heaving a deep sigh, I shouted to Stringer:

"This is our busy day!"

The next second I saw Stringer, the gorilla, the cage and the whole jungle spin round, turn a somesault and begin converging in on me. I thought:

"We're nose-diving....side-slipping....Now for the crash!....Ugh!"

I shut my eyes tightly, terrified by the sudden drumming of blood in my ears, and felt all sensation of touch slipping from my limbs and body. The sounds of the outside world grew fewer and fainter, and I heard the beating of my heart quieten down into a little murmur of weary contentment.

"This is death!" I thought, without fear or excitement.

Then I seemed to leave the falling aeroplane and ascend rapidly into space.

I saw the stars winking at me in a pitch black sky and performing phantasmagoric dances; but presently these, too, disappeared and I was alone in an infinite void, without light, or sound, or movement. In some strange way I still had the power of thought, but every vestige of sensation had been taken from me.

"Is this life after death?" I asked myself dispassionately.

My mind struggled with the problem, trying its utmost to achieve some form of activity. But it had no eyes, no hands, no limbs, no ears, no nose, no mouth, with which to accomplish anything. It was steam without the engine, electricity without the motor, energy without the necessary mechanism for transmitting it to power, soul without the body.

"Let me die outright!" I prayed. "Annihilation is better than this mere mentality afloat in nothing...."

A little twinkle of light showed itself in the utter

darkness. Then another, and another. And again the stars came into being.

But, by this time they were receding and I began dropping back to the dear old earth.

"This is resurrection!" I thought gladly. "Life—and *Movement!*...."

I felt my body returning to me as something warm, and sensitive, and oh! so human! Never was home more welcome to a weary traveller than was this uprush of sensuous consciousness to my isolated and lonely brain.

As the first sounds of the outside world broke on my ears again, I opened my eyes and was surprised to find myself contemplating the intense blue of a tropical sky.

I was lying on the grass, a few yards from our cage, and when I raised my head I saw Stringer panting and puffing over the prostrate form of our latest capture. Single-handed, he was trying to bind the brute's arms and legs.

"What's happened?" I cried, sitting up dizzily.

"You got a whiff of that gas, young man, and I had to drag you out into the open. If you can, give me a hand before he comes round."

I pulled myself together, got on my hands and feet, and crawled over to Stringer's side. There, I managed to render a little help.

"Did you—give it a....sniff of ether?" I gasped between by exertions.

"Yes!"

"You must have been pretty quick."

"Never hustled so much in my life...."

"This is absurd," I said. "We can't continue raking in gorillas at this rate all day. The strain's too great."

I wiped my perspiring brow and helped to tie the last knot.

"The other two seem to be very quiet," remarked Stringer.

We turned and looked at them. They were sitting just as they had been placed, perfectly still and upright, and showed clear signs of the deepest interest in our movements. Naturally, they had never seen anything like this before and must have been almost hypnotized with amazement. Once the elements of fear and anger are eliminated, it is probable that the anthropoid ape is capable of experiencing emotions very similar to our own. They can feel pity, affection, astonishment and—most of all—intense curiosity.

Apparently, they did not fear us and were not angry with us (or even with one another, now) but their curiosity must have been tremendous. Nothing else could account for their quiet behavior under such circumstances. It might be argued that the pressure of their bonds would hurt sufficiently to enrage even the most curious brute, but I think that the pain from the wounds caused in the fight would, in *their* opinion, account for all such discomforts. Their reasoning powers, equal to those of an eighteen months old child, were too limited to connect Stringer and myself with most of their troubles, and no doubt they still looked on us as two harmless and inoffensive females of their own species.

When our third captive regained consciousness, however, he must have told them of his suspicions, for I distinctly heard him give the DANGER call. It was followed by a guttural sound in a low key—an anthropoid expression with which I was not familiar. It may have been equivalent to "Impostors!" or "Spiteful Beasts!" or "Bad Characters!" Gorillas must meet

such animals in their own tribe, and it is probable that they can express their resentment of the fact to one another.

It is only human conceit which makes us think that character-reading, with the allied arts of backbiting and slander, are peculiar to our own species. Many of the so-called "dumb" brutes may be just as proficient as we are in telling one another exactly what they think of a third animal. In any case, I am convinced that our last victim gave us away to the other two.

The noise which they all began making was terrible. It must have been audible two or three miles away, and was evidently an exhibition of rage, with the intention of frightening us away.

"D'you think they're calling for help?" I asked Stringer. "If so, we'd better get back into the cage again."

"I don't like it," he shouted in reply. "Why haven't those infernal natives returned by now? And when are those stretcher bearers from the aerodrome going to arrive?"

I could feel in my bones that something tragic had happened—or was going to happen—or might happen! What was it? Whence would it come?

I scanned the encircling trees and when my gaze alighted on the first two gorillas I saw a sight which held me spellbound. The bushes immediately behind the smaller of the brutes had suddenly been thrust aside, and there emerged another of these jungle folk with an uplifted hand, bearing a club-shaped piece of wood.

It flashed through my startled brain that this ferocious-looking newcomer was about to strike one of our defenceless captives—an unthinkable crime—a piece of

animal "awfulness" which could not be tolerated by even the most callous human being.

There was only one way of preventing this sudden and dastardly attack, and I chose it unhesitatingly. Raising my automatic, I cried out to Stringer, hooked my finger round the trigger and pulled.

But I was too late. The strangest thing in the world had happened. Stringer's hand had shot forth with incredible swiftness, struck up my own, and diverted the bullet into the tree-tops.

"Good God!" he shouted, "Are you *blind,* man?"

I peered through the clearing smoke.

"Well, I'm damned!" I said.

CHAPTER XIII

THE GORILLA AT HOME

MY emotions were mixed. I was angry, and yet at the same time I was very grateful to Stringer and Providence. No man enjoys being the victim of a practical joke; neither does he relish the feeling that only good luck has prevented his committing homicide.

I thrust my revolver back into my hip pocket, and strode over to the gentleman with the club.

"Gran'pa!" I said. "You and your confounded *monkey* tricks will end in disaster one of these bright days. Why you couldn't have acquainted us of your approach is beyond me. You might have known that we were on the alert—ready to shoot at almost anything."

He removed his gorilla mask, mopped his brow and gave a forced laugh.

"Perhaps it was rather foolish of me," he admitted. "But I'd been watching you all from behind that bush for some minutes, and I couldn't resist a little practical joke....Phew! That was a near thing, George! I thought my last day had come."

He looked very shaky (served him right) and we had to take him over to the cage and give him a sip of brandy. I also had one, and so did Stringer.

We all felt better after that, and Stringer and I took off our anthropoid heads and escorted Gran'pa on a tour of inspection.

The enraged prisoners of war roared at us more defiantly than ever, now that their suspicions were con-

firmed. Their attempts at escape became prodigious and their language frightful.

"We got these two birds with one stone, so to speak," I shouted.

"Did you, by jove?" he cried.

He looked at them more closely and a shadow of pain seemed to flit over his features.

"You've knocked them about a lot, George. Was it necessary?"

"*We* didn't do it. They did it themselves. Fighting!"

I explained things to him in detail.

"No 'fluence?" he inquired of Stringer.

"No time for it!

"H'm! Still, we might try a little of it now, to quieten them...."

"Anything to stop this infernal row," agreed Stringer.

So, once more—but this time in the heart of the African jungle—Stringer brought his great mental powers to bear on the gorilla.

He stood as near as he dared to the largest and noisiest of our captives, focussed his compelling gaze on its wicked little eyes, and made domineering noises in the back of his throat.

The great brute quavered, fought a brief struggle for mental mastery, and then began shifting its gaze hither and thither in a vain endeavor to escape that burning, penetrating, hypnotic glare.

"Keep it up!" I said. "He's giving way!"

"*Tchah!*" cried Stringer.

The poor animal gave a shiver, let up a little whimper of shame and submission, and suddenly grew resigned to its fate. At the psychological moment Stringer

stretched forth a hand, rested it on the monster's head and pressed downwards. The victory of mind over matter was complete.

Five minutes later, the other two had been similarly pacified. But when the stretcher bearers arrived from the aerodrome the three brutes began to recover their evil tempers again, and we had great difficulty in placing them on their portable beds. The negroes were scared and refused to help us. Finally, however, Gran'pa, and Stringer and I each took charge of a stretcher and persuaded three of the blacks to catch hold of the opposite ends.

Thus we carried our roaring burdens along the narrow jungle pathway which led to the place of embarkation.

"They're quietening down again," said Gran'pa, as we unloaded. "Even a gorilla has enough sense to find out the futility of noise. Look! That big one's beginning to sulk. He'll probably maintain that attitude now and never utter another word. Let's give him some food, to show our approval."

We tried him with some of the white ribs of the pineapple leaf (a particular gorilla delicacy), but he refused. So did the others.

"Well, we can't waste time. They'll soon come round when they've got over their bad temper and begin to feel hungry.... We'd better get them aboard the 'planes."

Oakley had two on his machine, and Newland had the third.

It was a strange sight. The poor fellows looked so old-fashioned, sitting up in their chairs, with their curious little eyes peering from one side to another and their heads moving from side to side while the remainder

of their bodies kept perfectly still. One could hardly believe that they were animals.

"As this is the first consignment," said Gran'pa, "I think you'd better pop over in Newland's 'plane, George, and see them put safely aboard 'The Pilgrim Father.' You'll also be able to keep an eye on the others.... I say, Oakley!"

"Yes?"

"Don't get too far apart on the way back. Mr. Barnett's coming, as well, to act as an observer for both of you!"

"Good!"

I clambered aboard (with our gorilla in the middle seat), the propellers were swung, and off we went—upwards and upwards into the blue sky and the refreshingly cool air.

My excitement was intense. I had not even bothered to take off my gorilla skin. The head had been removed, of course, and I had slipped into my great coat and helmet, but I had not yet rid myself of the feeling that I was half-man and half-anthropoid ape.

For the first hundred miles,we flew without anything unusual happening.

Our own gorilla made neither movement nor sound, but the rear one on Oakley's machine kept straining at its bonds, with a stupid, brutish persistency. It was the huge beast which Stringer had commenced to bind while I was lying under the evil influence of that gas, and once or twice I couldn't help thinking:

"Is that brute secure?"

When we reached the upper course of the "Moondah" I scribbled a note on a scrap of paper and thrust it over to Newland.

"*Keep as near as you can to Oakley's 'plane,*" I had written.

I watched him read it, saw him nod his head, and felt the machine put on an extra spurt until the two 'planes were flying almost side by side.

Oakley's machine was now about fifty feet to the right and a little below the level of ours, so that I could see his passengers quite distinctly. The front one was quiet and resigned, but the rear one was still viciously struggling to escape. I was getting anxious, and, had there been any landing place visible, I should have felt very much inclined to signal Oakley to make a temporary halt for the purpose of examining the animal's bonds. The thought of its breaking loose in mid-air was appalling.

I kept a careful watch on its every movement and once, when it looked vindictively upwards at our 'plane, I shook my fist at it threateningly, waved my arms, and tried in every way I could to distract its attention. But it was useless. It turned its face away with supreme contempt and merely renewed its efforts with more enthusiasm than ever. It wrenched, and twisted, and strained; and suddenly something seemed to give way. After that, it kept very still for a while.

"What's happened?" I thought. "Has it kinked a muscle, broken a bone, or....?"

My mental query was answered by the dramatic appearance of first one free arm and then another. The scene was strangely reminiscent of one of those turns at a music hall, when a man undertakes to escape from a complexity of knotted ropes in so many minutes. It thrilled me by its cleverness; but it scared me by its dangerous possibilities.

In an instant I had my revolver out and kept the

brute covered. As long as it remained quiet, it was safe; but the moment it got out of that seat it would be a dead gorilla.

I saw Newland glance round at me and take in the whole situation. He brought the machine a little closer to the other and, as he did so, the gorilla grew alarmed, raised its hands in the air and sought for a hold amidst the struts.

"My God! The controls!" I thought, swiftly. "If it touches one of those, Oakley's done!"

I took a steady aim, pressed my finger to the trigger and fired three times in rapid sucession.

But I was too late. The gorilla was hit at the precise moment that it had grabbed one of the thin wires on which so much depends when a man is in mid-air.

Down went the great roaring machine—spinning round and round like a falling leaf in an autumn gale. For over two thousand feet it must have dropped. And then, I saw a little brown speck fall out into space. The machine nose-dived, flattened out, switchbacked, and gradually began to ascend into the blue heavens again.

"Good old Oakley!" I thought. "You're a marvel, man!"

As he came up, so we glided down to meet him, until at last I could wave my handkerchief as a sign of approval and welcome.

He answered my signal with a raised arm (and probably a quiet smile of triumph, had I been able to see it!) and once more we continued our journey homewards.

We met with no further exciting adventures, and half-an-hour later we alighted at the Corisco aerodrome and transferred our cargo from aeroplane to ship. There, the liberation of the monsters was accomplished

with cunning simplicity. A large cage, capable of holding about thirty gorillas, had been erected, together with a sort of annex, which connected with the former by means of a sliding door. In this smaller cage we placed the first gorilla, loosened his bonds a little (without actually untying them), and then placed him with his back to the bars. In this way we were able to remove his handcuffs from the outside.

He had sufficient intelligence and perseverance to liberate himself from the remainder of the bonds without our help, and when he had done this we raised the sliding door, drove him into the larger cage, closed the door again—and were ready for the next! Could anything have been simpler or safer?

Our two captives safely berthed, we wasted no time in returning to the Gorilla Country, which we again reached in just over an hour and a half.

I expected to find on our arrival a further consignment of live gorilla. But I was disappointed. The three red balloons hung lazily in the still, tropical air; but none of them showed the welcome flags of victory.

It appeared that Gran'pa and Stringer had returned to the jungle immediately after we had left for Corisco and since then—silence had reigned. Not a roar, not a bark of a gorilla had been heard. The three white men, with their retinue of blacks, might have been non-existent for all the signs of life they had shown since their return to the gloomy depths of the forest.

"Well," I said to Oakley, "I think I'll be getting along to my cage again."

"Right-ho!"

"We have to start back in four hours' time, don't we?"

He looked at his wrist watch. "Better not leave it any later than that."

"Bye-bye!"

"So long!" he answered, lighting a cigarette.

I went along the narrow pathway which led to our first cage, alone—and a little scared (although I wouldn't have admitted it to myself or anyone else for worlds).

There is something terribly unnerving about the perpetual, twilight gloom of the great African forests, unpenetrated by the sun even at mid-day. The trees lean over and threaten one with their immense bulk of branch and leaf; the bushes harbor God knows what crawling and prowling peril; and the swaying tendrils wave their arms to and fro like long, sentient things. All vegetable life seems to be working in unison with the animal life which creeps behind its dark and sinister shelter. One is given no respite.

There is always that sense of a Vindictive Something sneaking behind, or waiting in ambush in front, or prowling alongside—watching for its opportunity to spring. The snap of a twig, the sudden flight of a bird, the scurry of something small and harmless, the sough of the wind (like a deep breath), the rustle of leaves, the pad-pad of one's own feet, even the thumping of one's own heart—all these sounds are instantly translated into a sign of some terrible, carnivorous menace. One's sense of hearing becomes painfully acute—almost raw! One's nerves become keyed up to the breaking point. One's feeling of immense loneliness is appalling—and palpable!

As I hurried along, the conviction grew that I was no longer Man, the Lord of Creation, but merely a poor little defenceless creature, fleeing through a land of hideous, nightmare shapes. Of what use was a sporting

rifle, or a revolver? I could not aim in the dark. And, even if I could, there was still the danger of being taken unawares.

What was that?

Merely, the shrill cry of a parrot....

I tried to laugh at my folly, and, as a temporary diversion, I even tried to picture the wet and glistening streets converging on Piccadilly Circus—that symbol of a great civilized city where Man was indeed omnipotent.

But the vision would not persist. It became an epitome of vain endeavor. New York, London, Paris, all those huge capitals—what were they? Little blobs of buildings, which did not cover a millionth part of the world's wide surface; mere temporary excrescences on the immobile face of Mother Earth.

The jungle was unchanging, cynically indifferent to all but the relentless laws of Nature. It had seen men like me before, travelling blindly and painfully onwards to some ephemeral goal, and now and then it smote at us with its diseases, its lurking animals, its crawling reptiles, and its poisonous vegetation. But still we came.

What did these little serious and eager white men seek? It was not food; nor was it mates—as was the custom of the jungle folk. Who were these men, to-day, who came over on their great roaring birds and disguised themselves in the skins of their ancestors? Who was this solitary unit of humanity stumbling onward in the gloom? What did he seek?

I looked upwards at the great questioning canopy of green. But I could not answer. My name sounded too tragically inconsequential; my mission so childishly absurd!

The day before yesterday, men brought the Bible and medicine to the blacks, and received in exchange

their intangible souls. Yesterday, they brought cheap jewelry and deadly firearms, and took away ivory and rubber—and human life. To-day, they came with weird cries and sleep-inducing vapors—and flew away with live and protesting gorillas. To-morrow?.... Perhaps, they would remove the jungle itself....

It was strange that I, George Barnett, late of His Britannic Majesty's Civil Service, should become so psychological. Strange it was that I (who had never found thought of much consequence in my old profession) should now utilize my brains so freely. Was it morbid, or was it natural?..

I was brought back from the abstract to the real by the sudden appearance of a gigantic snake lying right in the centre of my path. It evidently heard my approach, for it erected its head, slid forward a little, and prepared to strike.

At the same moment, I fired—and missed.

Not daring to risk another shot, I turned and ran for my life, the hideous thing coming after me with a peculiar half-leaping, half-slithering motion.

I ran as I've never run before, with sheer terror lending a miraculous aid to my flying feet, and when I saw an elephant track crossing my line of retreat at right-angles I rounded the corner like the wind.

But it was a vain hope. The serpent, with the age-long wisdom of its kind, was not to be hoodwinked in this simple manner. Instead, it cut through the underbrush and thereby gained a good yard.

On and on I tore—a man in gorilla's clothing, but with the heart of a mouse!

I must have covered over a quarter of a mile before I reached the end of the chase, and it came so suddenly and swiftly that I thought for one wild moment that my pursuer had overtaken and struck me. The ground

gave way beneath my feet, I shot head over heels down a steep slope, hit a tree trunk, bounded off again, and at last came to a full stop.

Dazed as I was by the fall, I realized at once what had happened. I had tumbled ignominiously into one of the elephant-traps made by the natives of this locality. It was a hole about eight feet square and nearly a dozen deep, and, as I looked upwards, I saw the serpent's head appear over the edge, then its body—and down it came with a flop.

It is astonishing how quickly the human mind can work in moments of real danger. In the merest fraction of a second my eyes had taken in the one possible avenue of escape—a long vertical creeper, dangling the end of its thick arm within a yard of my head.

With a cry, I leapt into the air, grabbed my hope of salvation in both hands and hauled myself aloft.

The serpent, too, had erected itself on a coiled base and was preparing to strike. Its head swayed slowly to and fro and its evil tongue shot in and out, as if in grim, sardonic anticipation of its meal.

I wriggled my right hand free, got at my revolver, took aim, and fired straight into its open mouth.

The sight was terrible—but majestic! The huge bulk of headless muscle lurched forward, struck blindly at my legs and collapsed in a writhing mass of impotence.

For fully a minute I hung there, watching the death throes of my pursuer. Then, when I could hold on no longer, I jumped clear, landed heavily on my feet and hands, and commenced scrambling out of that horrible pit.

Safe and sound again, I retraced my steps at a gentle trot.

To the chattering monkeys who swung from branch to branch above and looked down on me with startled

curiosity, I must have presented a strange sight. My gorilla skin was tattered and torn, my face and hands were scratched and bleeding, my hair was in wild disorder. A fine caricature of a man who had known the joys of white spats and carefully creased trousers and a well cut coat, and bone-rimmed, circular spectacles!

I must have covered nearly a mile before I realized what I ought to have guessed long ago. I was lost!

It was not a pleasant discovery, and, the moment I made it, I stood still and did some very hard thinking. Now that it was too late, I saw that we should have prepared for such a contingency and marked some of the trees which flanked our pathway from the aerodrome to the cages.

I tried to recollect the way I had come, but knew that any attempt to get back to the open country where the aerodrome was situated might only lead me still further astray.

"Oh, for a 'plane—or a balloon!" I thought.

That last mental image saved me! I sought out a suitable tree, leapt up at its lowest branch, caught hold of it, and raised my bruised and weary body to the first step upwards.

I climbed slowly but alertly—and much to the alarm of a couple of monkeys perched in one of its topmost branches. They fled chattering along the pale green surface above.

Half-way up, I cursed my torn and impeding gorilla skin, discarded it, and resumed the journey in a pair of "shorts" and a shirt.

Below, everything was dark and gloomy and foreboding; but, above, the sun extended thin fingers of gold amidst the green leaves.

"If I have to die," I thought, "let it be up here, where the air is pure and there is light."

For over a hundred feet I continued that ascent to freedom, and then I stopped and listened to a peculiar fluttering noise on my left.

I craned my neck and peered through the branches.

The "thing" came into view—a great red ball, beneath which there billowed and waved the flags of America and England!

"Balloon ahoy!" I shouted, deliriously.

("And they've caught another gorilla!" I thought, subconsciously.)

There was no answer, and after giving still another futile shout, I began working my way from one tree to another until I came to the edge of a clearing containing one of our cages. By crawling out to the extremity of a huge horizontal branch, I was at last able to look below.

"Hello, there!" I shouted.

I saw the two blacks turn their faces skywards and, tearing off my vest, I waved it aloft.

"Hel-lo-oh....!" came a voice which was apparently Gran'pa's.

Without further palaver, I commenced my descent to *terra firma*. From bough to bough I dropped in quick succession, until, when I reached the last, I was only twenty feet above ground level.

Having no desire to drop from this height into a tangle of underbrush, I worked my way out to the tip of the branch, hung for a moment on the end of the arch it so considerately made, and then let go.

I fell on my feet as gracefully as an acrobat.

"By George!" exclaimed Gran'pa, running up to me. "It's....George!"

"What's left of him!" I breathed.

"What on earth have you been doing now?" he asked.

(A nice greeting, but characteristic of Gran'pa!)

"It's a new game," I observed, quietly. "When *you* get lost in that damned jungle it may occur to even you! I've been up there looking for the nearest balloon. Thank God I found it—even if it did happen to be yours!"

I told him the tale of my adventures.

"It was very foolish of you to come alone," he admonished. "And—where's your gorilla skin?"

"Half-way up a tree—such as there's left of it.... You've caught another gorilla, I see."

"Yes! A beauty! How did you get on with the other three?"

"So—so!....One of them broke loose on the way back—and I had to shoot it."

"But...."

"For heaven's sake, don't argue!" I said. "If I *hadn't* shot the brute.... Well, as it was, Oakley very nearly crashed."

"We do seem to be unlucky, George!" he complained.

"I think it's just the opposite. Four captures on the first day is far better than any of us expected. We're collecting *gorillas*—not monkey-nuts."

"I agree. But Stringer and you should have paid greater attention to the bindings. There's really no excuse, George, for slipshod work in a dangerous job like this. We don't want any blood shed, either our own or the gorillas. Already, we've lost one life and it was apparently by the merest fluke that we didn't lose two others."

It was disgraceful of him to start lecturing a man

who had just been through what I had. Besides, he was no paragon himself.

"What about yourself and your silly monkey trick this morning?" I retorted. "You nearly lost *your* life! If ever a man had a beam in his eye...."

"Now, now, George! I'm only telling you what should be obvious to everyone of us. We *must* exercise more care. We're getting far too matter-of-fact. Things have been too easy for us."

I glanced at my bruised and bloodstained legs and arms.

"I'd like you to have ten minutes with that snake I met. You'd be a much better man for it—if you were spared!"

"Don't be so vindictive, George! It was your own fault. You shouldn't go wandering about the jungle alone! You ought to have known better."

"Oh, rats!" I exclaimed. "I'm fed up with this. I've had quite enough for one day—and I want my tea ....I'm going home."

"Go back to the aerodrome by all means, but at least wait there until the rest of us are ready to return."

I could feel my temper rising rapidly and could also see that Gran'pa was in one of his calm, sarcastic, irritating moods. It was safer to go, before I rose in my wrath and smote him.

"Very well!" I snapped. "Lend me a black to take me back."

Without another word to me, Gran'pa beckoned to one of them, told him to escort me to the aerodrome, and then walked away in the direction of his cage, softly whistling to himself.

I left immediately, deliberately stifling all desire for a reconciliation. I would not stand any more of this

rejuvenated old man's impertinence. Damn him and his collection of doddering ancients! Why should I endanger my health and vitality as a gland-snatching maniac in the middle of a jungle? For two pins I'd mutiny and return to England....

My temper rose. So did my temperature. And the upshot of it was that my complaint was diagnosed that evening as malaria.

It was a mild attack, and quinine and Sally Rebecca soon pulled me through; but it left me weak and depressed for many days. To add to my depression, the others experienced a spell of very bad luck in the jungle. The gorillas had apparently "got the wind up," as Gran'pa said. They not only avoided our cages, but even migrated from the whole of the surrounding country. Negroes went out reconnoitering, hoping to discover their line of retreat; the cages were moved by aeroplane to spots fifty or sixty miles further inland; and the hangar was transferred to a new aerodrome. By these means we managed to capture another eight gorillas, making a grand total of eleven (not counting the one lost in transit).

Already the first two of the six months dry season had nearly passed.

"This will never do," I said to Gran'pa, who had just returned from spending the day in Libreville. "Even if we maintain the same rate of capture we can't collect more than thirty or forty before the wet season sets in."

I was sitting on the veranda of our bungalow, overlooking the deep blue Bay of Corisco. It was evening, and from the shore came the sound of negro merriment.

"You'll be able to join us again next week," said Gran'pa. "I hope for better luck then...."

"That's very nice of you!"

"Besides, we now have half the neighboring tribes searching for new hunting grounds. These blacks will do anything for a trip in a 'plane. It gives them a big social status, you know—like a knighthood in your country."

Molly and Sally Rebecca entered.

"Hello, Mollikins!" greeted Gran'pa. "Been for a swim?"

"Rather!" cried Molly. "It was lovely!"

"The water's like silk to-night," corroborated Sally Rebecca. "I do wish I could swim—instead of wading ....How are you feeling, George?"

"Not so bad for a youngster," I said, contrasting my own jaded condition with that of Gran'pa's fiancée. (There was no doubt that the active, open-air life and Gran'pa's system of physical jerks had greatly improved her health and vitality).

"*I* think Daddy looks *heaps* better," asserted Molly, standing and viewing me with her feet apart.

"So I am, my dear! Who wouldn't be, with two such companions as you girls?"

The girl of seventy blushed and the girl of twelve laughed good-humoredly—the old and the modern way of taking a compliment.

Then Stringer and Dr. Croft entered.

They had just come back from the jungle, and looked a little jaded and despondent.

"Any luck today?" I asked.

"None!" answered Croft, briefly. "But we've news—of a sort. Old Nchago says that he's discovered a fresh hunting ground, and has seen, or heard, upwards of a dozen male and female gorillas."

"Ah!" exclaimed Gran'pa, with a quick glance at his beloved. "I'm glad there's a chance of getting a

lady gorilla or two. I was beginning to lose heart...."

"They'll take some catching," I said. "If we could pursue the ladies, instead of trying to *lure* them....up to the gas-works...."

"You're quite right, George. Were we merely after their blood, instead of their glands—like the so-called average sportsman—we should have been overstocked by now!"

Stringer, who very seldom had any suggestion to make, joined in. The slump in captives had depressed him even more than the rest of us.

"I think the mistake," he observed, "was not to have kept the old men in Corisco. We could then have shot our gorillas, taken their glands back the same evening, and finished the whole job within twenty-four hours. This business of collecting live gorillas and keeping them for several months...." Words failed him and he made no effort to conceal his disgust.

Gran'pa disagreed, as usual.

"I thought all this out before," he said. "I didn't feel that the climate here would suit men of seventy and upwards."

"It seems to have agreed with Miss Froud," grunted Stringer, rather rudely.

I am thankful to say that Sally Rebecca and Molly had tactfully left us, no doubt aware that trouble was brewing.

Gran'pa, who hated criticism, kept calm. He weighed his words carefully, and uttered them soothingly.

"You must remember," he pointed out, "that Miss Froud is an exception. Not only is she the youngest and healthiest of these old people but, in addition, she has naturally been the object of more individual care

and attention than I could possibly lavish on a party of eighty-seven old men."

"I admit that," mumbled Stringer, pessimistically. "But I don't see why the others couldn't have taken their chance. *We* have to—out there in the jungle...." He waved a podgy arm eastwards, in the direction of the Dark Continent.

"No man recognizes the fact more than I do," replied Gran'pa, quickly and warmly. "I needn't have come at all. None of us need!"

I could see that both Stringer and Gran'pa were beginning to lose their tempers, and I tried to smooth matters down.

"All this," I remarked, "doesn't get us any further. The point is, would it be advisable to bring the old men to the gorillas, as Stringer suggests, or take the gorillas to the old men, as we had arranged?"

"We can't have them here," said Gran'pa. "The delay and trouble would be tremendous. Besides, I will not be a party to the wholesale slaughter of any animal. It isn't sport, but murder! You've read of modern tiger-hunting. Half-naked blacks, armed with sticks, drive the poor, frightened beasts out of the jungle as if they were rabbits. And the big game hunters shoot them down—again, like rabbits. Pah! It makes my blood boil! What chance has the tiger?.... They'll start *shelling* animals next—or machine-gunning them.... No! We must go on doing our best, and doing it cleanly and humanely. There may be a temporary slump; but things aren't hopeless. To-morrow, we'll get on the track of this new colony, or whatever it is. Come, Stringer, I'm surprised at you!.... Don't look so miserable...."

Stringer's expression of Old Bill-like melancholy

slowly vanished, and we began basking in the sunshine of one of his most fascinating smiles. His bushy eyebrows and walrus moustache gave up bristling, and gently subsided; his eyes twinkled; once more did hope kindle in his breast.

"That's better!" exclaimed Gran'pa. "Now, if only we could only hit on some idea for attracting the females—which seem to be about six times as plentiful as the males—and a hundred times as shy.... We might, for instance, capture one of their babies and use it as a sort of decoy duck.... It's obviously no good trying to disguise ourselves as infant gorillas-in-arms. The real article is what we want....George, we must get one of their 'puppies'—something which will howl for its mummie! If only we can awaken the lady gorilla's finer feelings—her desire to cherish and fondle the young—she's ours! What?....?"

"It sounds rather a low down trick," I replied.

"Not at all," said Dr. Croft. "It's perfectly legitimate—if it works!"

Stringer, who had been looking much brighter and happier up to this point, again showed signs of despondency.

"If you do get a baby gorilla," he observed, "it doesn't follow that any but its own mother will show affection for it."

"Nonsense!" dogmatized Gran'pa. "The moment its howl for food or material comfort goes up, it will awaken a tender response in the breast of every true feminine gorilla in the jungle. You see if I'm not correct!"

Four days later, we got our first chance of proving—or disproving—Gran'pa's new theory.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CAPTURE OF LITTLE WILLIE

FROM what little we already knew of the anthropoid apes and from what the natives told us, we soon realized the improbability of discovering a very young gorilla without its mother. Even then, it would be necessary to sacrifice life before a capture could be effected.

It took over two hours to convince Gran'pa of the likelihood of having to shoot at least one female gorilla. Fortunately, I was not yet well enough to take part in the affair, and so the objectionable task fell to the lot of Stringer and Dr. Croft.

For the first time in the history of our campaign we sent forth a detachment of our party with the sole aim of killing—like " real sportsmen," as Gran'pa said with bitter cynicism.

To our eternal shame, this is what happened.

Armed with guns and accompanied by two natives, Stringer and Croft were walking cautiously and quietly through the forest when they heard the wail of a young gorilla—a harsh, half-moaning sound, quite unlike any cry uttered by the adult.

The heavy silence of mid-day was upon the woods, and the four assassins crept noiselessly towards the spot where the baby was spasmodically conversing with its mother and, possibly, its father—who would be doubly dangerous when protecting his wife and offspring.

Croft's heart was beating furiously, Stringer's eyebrows and moustache were bristling with excitement, and the two negroes were showing a very evident desire

for flight. One can understand the emotions of the party, for this was their first attempt at big game stalking.

Presently, through a sheltering screen of branches and leaves, they had their first vision of what might be called the domestic side of gorilladom.

A young gorilla was seated on the ground, enjoying a meal of berries; whilst a yard or so further away sat its mother, who was also having lunch. Stringer says that it was a pretty and interesting sight. I believe him.

With a quiet courage, born possibly of intense curiosity, Stringer, Croft and the two natives lay down on the earth, hardly daring to breathe, their guns in readiness, determined to wait awhile—and watch....

So far, there were no signs of the dread *paterfamilias,* but before a couple of minutes had passed, the bush moved and the huge husband waddled forth. He looked a trifle uneasy, as if sensing some vague, antagonistic presence, and his wicked and cunning little eyes seemed to search the surrounding foliage in bloodthirsty anticipation of slaughter.

After glancing round at him, his wife called her child, with a low guttural cluck. It ran over to her immediately and flung its arms round her neck, its legs round her body, and its face against her chest—the very picture of human infantile shyness!

Apparently, the female gorilla's sensitiveness to danger would shame the most coy and retiring woman ever created.

Without waiting for a word of real warning from her lord and master, she gave vent to a loud scream and took to instant flight. Meanwhile, the male protector erected himself to his full height. He then let up a deep,

challenging roar of defiance and smote at his chest with clenched fists, as if beating himself into a fury.

Both Stringer and Croft afterwards stated that, at this point, the powers of human reason and kindliness forsook them. They became mere machines behind the gleaming barrels of the guns—sportsmen, relentlessly driven into action by the spirit of the chase—or the spirit of self-defence—or, what you will.

They fired almost simultaneously, and both the adult gorillas fell mortally wounded, the baby still clinging to its mother and crying pitifully. *"Hoo!. . . .Hoo!. . . ."*

Ashamed and trembling, Stringer and Croft waited in ambush for a few moments, before they prepared to take the little one from its dead mother.

Still clutching her neck and body, it kept its face half-buried in her chest; but the moment its enemies came into the open it turned and screamed at them with all the inherited savagery of its race .

Then, with extraordinary courage, it suddenly rushed at one of the natives, bit him in the leg, and rapidly retreated to a small tree.

A second later, it was sitting aloft, shouting vindictive threats at its aggressors.

A council of war was held. No one showed the least inclination to try and capture this mere two-year-old baby boy. Apart from its biting capacity, it was probably much stronger than a full grown man—and certainly twice as nimble.

But in the end, as Gran'pa had so often insisted, brains will tell. Stringer, who had secretly profited by his circus experience in the old lion-taming days, gave a little exhibition in the gentle art of lassooing—under difficulties.

After an extremely thrilling performance, lasting

over half-an-hour, Little Willie, as he was eventually called, was brought home, ignominiously and under great protest, in a sack.

Never have I met such a two-foot bundle of savagery and cunning. Four men could hold him more or less comfortably; three, uncomfortably; two, with the utmost difficulty; and, one—I shudder to think what would have happened....

When he and Gran'pa were first introduced to one another, Little Willie was sitting peacefully at the end of his fully extended chain, deeply absorbed in one of his toe-nails.

"Well, old chap?" said Gran'pa, affably.

No answer.

"Poor little fellow! I expect he's pretty homesick, George!"

No doubt Gran'pa's intentions were of the best. He merely wanted to be friendly and, at the same time, to examine our little captive more closely. So, after carefully satisfying himself that there was no risk of being bitten, Gran'pa approached still nearer, stooped, and made further remarks signifying comradeship.

Little Willie ignored him for about half a minute. Then he turned his head slightly, as though measuring the distance which separated him from this new and talkative specimen of humanity.

The next moment a hairy foot shot out; there was a gorilla scream of revengeful glee, a human yell of alarm and pain, a sound of scuffling and tearing—and Little Willie quickly retreated, holding a piece of trouser-leg in his left foot.

Unsatisfied with Gran'pa's curses and this tangible emblem of victory (which was now in Little Willie's mouth), the sprightly gorilla-child next dashed across

to an amused native, severely bit him in the leg, and then described a large circle round the stake to which his chain was fastened.

Apparently, he wanted to make a clean sweep of all spectators. He accomplished his desire quite easily. The natives ran for their lives. Gran'pa and I hurriedly withdrew; and Stringer, who had been coming in our direction, suddenly stopped—and thought better of it.

"Cunning little beast!" grunted Gran'pa, exploring his bruised shin through the hole in his trouser leg.

"I told you he was dangerous!" I said.

"Dangerous, yes! But you didn't say *treacherous!*"

"Is it any worse," I asked, "than our dressing up as lady gorillas and gassing our innocent admirers?"

"Er....put that way, perhaps not. Still, we must be very careful...."

"I always am!" I observed, thinking of the air of indifference displayed by Gran'pa when I had once been chased by a snake in the jungle.

"Don't goad me, George! It was perfectly natural to try if the little fellow was amenable to ordinary human kindness?"

Stringer had joined us by now and expressed the opinion that all gorillas, especially male, were absolutely untamable and that it was a waste of time to appeal to their better nature, because they had none.

"We shall see...." said Gran'pa mysteriously.

Unfortunately, we didn't; for the next day Little Willie performed the same gymnastic feat on Oakley. The only difference was that, instead of procuring a piece of cloth as a reward, he removed a small portion of Oakley's flesh.

So much for a newly-captured baby gorilla as a possible pet.

As a decoy, however, Little Willie was much more promising, and a week or so after his compulsory enlistment in the services of the aged we took him out to his native jungle again.

Staking him in the centre of a small clearing in the forest—as near as possible to the new gorilla haunt discovered by Nchago—Croft and I donned our gorilla garb and retired to the cage.

Instead of sitting in the open and calling for mates, we intended giving Little Willie the honor of notifying the females of his race that he was in dire need of help and comfort.

He did this admirably and almost incessantly, while several yards away from him lay a circle of half-a-dozen hidden nozzles connected with the " gas-works."

Exactly what he said was not known to us. He may have been merely complaining of the great difficulty of escaping to the shelter of the forest. Or, he may have been shouting out the names of his friends and relations.

Once or twice, he made that pathetic noise of *"Hoo! ....Hoo!...."* as if pondering on the tenderness of his years and bemoaning the harshness of life.

Still as death, we sat huddled in our cage, watching and waiting!

The minutes dragged by into hours. Noon came, with its strange silence and stifling heat. A long way off, we heard the bark of a male gorilla. Later, the scream of a startled female.

As this last sound reached him, Little Willie gave a loud cry of distress and tugged wildly at his chain. Then silence again.

I looked at my watch. In two hours' time we should have to start our flight back to Corisco.

Stealthily and silently, Croft and I partook of food

and drink. We needed it. So, no doubt, did poor Little Willie; but it would have been very unwise to have left our cage in order to feed him. In the gloomy shelter of the surrounding bush, we knew not how many pairs of eyes might even now be watching—how many gorilla hearts might be on the point of responding to his plaintive appeals.

Throughout the whole of our African adventures I think that none had been as trying and nerve-racking as the present. It was a terrible strain to keep still and silent when we might have been gambolling in the open, calling for male companionship.

Every jungle sound, too, was magnified by our alert brains into something of tremendous importance. A cracking twig or branch immediately betokened the hesitating steps of some curious gorilla. An unusual cry or movement on the part of Willie was instantly interpreted as a sign that he had seen or heard one of his kinsfolk.

Our disappointments were innumerable, and our faith in the gorilla's " human " nature was being undermined with every passing minute. It was inconceivable that none of Willie's own people had heard his cries. Why, then, had they not answered? Were they so utterly inhuman that no appeal, however pitiful, could penetrate their selfishness?

I half expected such depravity of the males, but I could not bring myself to believe it of the females. Nchago had told me that he once saw a mother gorilla tenderly stroking the head of her child as it fed at her breast. If she could do that, why could she not understand and respond to Little Willie's cries for maternal comfort? Were the gorilla's nobler instincts confined solely to its own children?

At three o'clock in the afternoon I lost hope completely and grew reckless enough to stretch my arms and legs.

In sympathy, Croft did likewise.

"Confound these shy and sensitive females...." he whispered. "There's only half-an-hour left."

As if he were able to read our thoughts and was very anxious to help us, Little Willie threw back his head and gave a great cry of distress—a sort of last whining appeal to the better nature of his male and female relations in general.

In the ensuing silence, it seemed as though the whole jungle was listening—and hesitating. Not a tree moved; not a branch; not a leaf. Coincidental as it must have been, that childlike wail of anguish was followed by all nature suddenly becoming inanimate.

Even Croft and I had turned to stone, so expectant were we, so convinced of the imminence of great events.

Then the tension relaxed.

A neighboring tree stirred, a small, brightly colored bird flew by with a startled tweet, twigs began cracking, and Little Willie ran along on all fours until he was roughly pulled up by the jerk of his fully-extended chain. Back again in the opposite direction he scampered, excitedly muttering to himself the while.

There was now no doubt whatever that his quick eyes had seen something He emitted a long drawn "*Hoo—oo—oo!....*" repeated it, and finally lost his self-control in a fit of gibbering ecstasy.

A second later, the reward of all those long hours of patience was at hand. The bush parted, the hideous face of an adult gorilla appeared in the opening, a low "cluck-cluck!" proceeded from its great, projecting muzzle,

and Little Willie commenced wildly dancing up and down on his hands and feet.

The newcomer hesitated before advancing into the open, but I was already convinced by its action, its build and its voice that it belonged to the female persuasion—which was exactly what we wanted.

As the brute cautiously waddled into full view I saw that she was long past her prime. Her hair was grayish, her back bowed with age, and her gait awkward and jerky, a veritable grandmother.

My disappointment at this unexpected development was so keen that I nearly shouted at her to go away. From Little Willie's point of view she was undoubtedly a great success, for he put his arms around her at once; but from our own, and more humanitarian point of view, she was useless. Only a lunatic would think of trying to rejuvenate himself with the glands of a grandmother gorilla. The thing was ridiculous and, in our enthusiasm for the cause, wholly unanticipated. What we required were young, virile gorillas, not doddering old females.

I glanced at Croft through the corner of my eyes, forgetting for the moment that any dismay which he might be feeling would naturally be hidden behind his gorilla mask.

When I looked round again at Little Willie and his companion, I was surprised to find that three other gorillas were now approaching, and—what was still more exciting—they were youthful and active—and feminine.

"Aunts!" I thought. "Or, possibly, sisters...."

Without further speculation as to the precise relationships involved in this family reunion, I leant care-

fully forward, found the taps of the cylinders, and turned on the gas.

For nearly half-a-minute Little Willie and his fair companions continued their affectionate demonstrations. They examined him, chattered amicably with one another, and showed an intelligent but suspicious interest in his chain.

Presently, the grandmother of the party heaved a deep sigh, disentangled herself from Willie's embraces and settled down contentedly for an afternoon nap. At the same time, her foundling crept over to her, placed his face against her chest, and sympathetically joined her in slumber.

The other three ladies looked puzzled and stupefied; then slightly alarmed. They commenced sauntering back to the bush, where they probably intended sleeping off the effect of this strange tired feeling which had seized them.

We watched them calmly, staking the reputation of our gas against their waning powers of locomotion. Their great difficulty was to use their long arms in the normal way—as a species of crutches—and before they had gone a couple of yards it was clear that whatever else happened, a short recuperative rest was first essential.

"One....two....three...." counted Croft, as they capitulated. "Nice little bag of flappers, eh?"

After those six weary hours of silence, I laughed aloud. It was, indeed, a fitting reward for our exemplary patience—and wouldn't Gran'pa (and Sally Rebecca) be pleased?

"So that's that!" I said. "Now let's get into our gas masks."

We donned our protectors, opened the door of the

cage, and swaggered forth to truss up the fruits of victory.

With the grace and skill that comes of long practice, we first bound and handcuffed the three younger females. Then we turned to the grandmother.

It was at this point that the usual thing happened—the unexpected. It seems characteristic of any well-organized jungle always to spring some surprise on human intruders.

About half-a-dozen yards to the rear of us, a sudden roll of thunder burst from the bush. Without attempting to finish the job we already had on hand, we swung round in the direction of the newcomer, just in time to see him advance into the open.

He was extremely angry, as any faithful husband naturally would be at seeing one (or more) of his wives lying bound and helpless on the grass; and he signified his emotion in the usual theatrical way.

First, he stood erect; then he smote himself on the chest, as if he were beating a drum; finally, he broke into a long roar, which ended in a series of staccato barks.

I saw Croft shiver through his gorilla skin, and knew that he had a similar vision of me. Except for our disarming and feminine disguise, we were unprotected. In our haste we had left our revolvers in the cage. But, thank heavens, we had not turned off the gas. Therein lay our one hope of victory.

Realizing the importance of pacific measures, I raised my gas mask for a moment and gave the low guttural call of the female to its mate. So did Croft.

But the huge brute, which was now hardly a dozen feet away, was not going to be hoodwinked in this manner. He may have believed that we were friendly

disposed females of his own race, but apparently he intended demanding an explanation of our conduct. What had we been doing to the others? Why were they lying there wounded?

He struck himself again—and there we sat, gibbering with fear and contrition, in the midst of that invisible cloud of gas.

"? * ? * ?" said Croft, softly and seductively.

I tried to echo his sentiments, but couldn't. The great, terrifying bulk was so near that I could hear its breath coming out in deep gasps, could see into its cavernous mouth—black-lipped, white-fanged and hideous. My limbs were dead and useless, my throat dry, and my heart pounding madly at my ribs.

I saw the brute raise his hand to strike, and waited for the shock with a half-stupefied feeling of resignation.

But the blow never matured. At the last second of the eleventh hour, his energy and anger forsook him. With a deep groan, he lurched forward, blundered on to me (as I fell backwards), and sprawled face downwards on the grass.

As though escaping from the clutches of some hideous nightmare, I felt the power of movement returning. My arms and legs twitched playfully, the warm blood coursed through my back again, my hair subsided, and my mouth instinctively opened to let forth a loud cry for help.

Croft was at my side instantly, tugging at the dead weight which lay across my legs. Bruised and shaken, I wriggled my way back to freedom. Then we staggered over to the cage, gulped down a brandy, pocketed our revolvers and returned to the fray.

Ten minutes later, all the gorillas, except Little

Willie, were safely bound, the gas was turned off and we were sitting in the cage again, slowly recuperating. The perspiration was streaming from me, my hands and knees were trembling, and I felt as weak as a man recovering from a severe attack of influenza.

"It—never rains—but it pours!" panted Croft.

"Yes!" I gasped. "Even the perspiration!.... We're understaffed. It's too much—for only two of us."

Having no desire for further captures that afternoon, we presently fired half-a-dozen revolver shots to scare off any intending intruders and then let up the balloons with a string of five Stars and Stripes and Union Jacks attached, as a signal to the aerodrome.

With a very luke-warm interest, after so much excitement, we watched the gorillas slowly regain consciousness, and listened sympathetically to the male's language when he fully awoke to the general state of affairs. It must have been extremely galling to find himself sitting bound, helpless and dazed, after the dramatic and promising appearance which he had made only a few minutes previously. But to suffer this indignity in full view of his womenfolk must indeed have been draining the cup of misery to the dregs.

Whether or not the others were taunting him I do not know, but after listening to some of their softer and more ladylike remarks, he broke out into a terrible paroxysm of fury, glaring in our direction and barking and roaring at us for quite five minutes with hardly a pause for breath. Add to this deafening noise the encouraging screams of the three young females, the croaks of the old grandmother, and the harsh yells of Little Willie as he dashed to and fro, deliberately fanning the flames of hatred and revenge. The result may be

imagined. Our bruised nerves threatened to give way under the strain.

"Give 'em a little gas, for the love of glory!" shouted Croft.

In this way we quietened them down, until Gran'pa arrived from the aerodrome, followed by a single file of stretcher bearers.

"This is very gratifying, George," he said. "When I counted those flags I could hardly believe my eyes. You get extraordinary luck. Everything you touch seems to turn to—gorilla!"

The gas having been cut off, the chorus of hate broke loose again.

"We can't have this din," shouted Gran'pa.

"I don't see how you'll get your gorilla without it," I cried. "It's those wretched females that keep the old man going. I believe he'd have enough sense to remain quiet if he were by himself."

Gran'pa watched them for awhile.

"Yes," he said at last. "You can see that they're deliberately inciting him to shout us down—evidently under the impression that if only they scream hard enough we shall funk it and run. Just like some of our own women, George...."

I was not in the mood for cheap cynicism. All I wanted was peace, comfort, and Corisco.

"We've very little time to waste," I yelled. "What are you going to do?"

"Take them as they are," he answered. "Once we get them separated they may calm down a bit."

Plunging boldly into the midst of the inferno of noise, we first lifted the three young females on to the stretchers and despatched them to the aerodrome, with Croft in charge of the procession.

Then we turned to the gray-haired grandmother, who had shouted herself so hoarse that she could now speak hardly above a whisper.

Gran'pa looked down at her, with a kindly light in his eyes, as if he understood only too well what it was to be old and decrepit.

"The really humane thing," he said, during a comparative calm, "would be to ask her to join the Rejuvenation Club. But the other members might object. So we'll let her end her days in peace. She seems a decent old lady—a little rugged and repulsive-looking, judged by our own standards of beauty, but probably quite a respected member of society in the jungle.... Very interesting, George! Do these old people support themselves, or are they dependent on their children and grandchildren, I wonder...."

Gran'pa's speculative garrulity irritated me. I still felt far too jumpy to respond to his feeble attempts at humor.

"Why not spend a few days with her?" I suggested. "Dressed up as her eldest daughter, you could obtain quite an insight into gorilla life."

"Too risky!" he laughed. "The other girls might be jealous—which would only lead to discord."

"On the other hand, you might get an offer of marriage from some wealthy young bachelor."

"You flatter me, George!"

"Not at all! You've just the build and....becoming appearance...."

"Now you're getting merely rude, George....Give me a hand with papa!"

We lifted the roaring mass of bone and muscle on to the stretcher, tucked him in, so to speak, and then turned our attention to Little Willie.

It was terrible to see such rage in one so young. He must have been repeating every oath in the gorilla vocabulary. He also showed us every tooth in his head, tore savagely at his chain, and even flung handfuls of turf at us. But we knew how to deal with these childish tantrums A novice might have tried smacking him—and so might one of his own people. Our method was much safer. A straight six-foot branch, forked at the one end, is the best device I know for leading baby gorillas quietly home.

After about five minutes' active manoeuvring, Gran'pa managed to place the fork against Little Willie's neck, the chain being held just slack enough to permit of sufficient room for breathing purposes.

"Now!" said Gran'pa, kindly but firmly.

His captive made what was no doubt a fitting reply, caught hold of the branch in both hands, tried to bite it, found the feat a gymnastic impossibility, and ignominiously gave in. Sitting down, he awaited developments.

"Come along!" requested Gran'pa, tugging at the chain and stick.

Little Willie was wise. He followed Gran'pa much in the same playful and affectionate way that a monkey follows on organ grinder.

When they were twenty yards or so away I loosened the old lady gorilla's bonds sufficiently to allow her to escape—after a little necessary ingenuity—and hurried after Gran'pa.

A couple of hours later we were all safely back in Corisco.

In one day we had demonstrated beyond question that not only could baby gorillas communicate with their own people, but also that the female adults were

creatures capable of exhibiting an astonishing depth of devotion towards the young. Furthermore, our total number of live and serviceable gorillas had leapt from eleven to fifteen—a progress sufficiently noteworthy to impress Gran'pa with a sense of even my importance.

That same evening, he said:

"We're getting on, George, although it's a much longer job than I expected when we first came out here. We must be patient, however. At any moment there may be a new idea come along which will cause a landslide—and we shall capture a whole jungleful of 'em. I feel much more hopeful now you've joined up again. ."

CHAPTER XV

A GORILLA BREAKS LOOSE

IN spite of Gran'pa's optimism and my reputed good luck, we captured only eight more gorillas in the next two months. Little Willie also escaped by intelligently pulling up his peg and making a sudden dash for the jungle—an act of gross ingratitude after all we had done for him.

To add to our gloomy forebodings of the future, we lost one of the finest males through illness. I am convinced that its trouble was mental. For nearly a week it refused to eat, but merely sat brooding over what may well have been its lost kingship of the jungle—a truly touching picture of a banished anthropoid Bonaparte.

This suicide by hunger-striking was only one instance of the many psychological complexities with which we had to contend. The male gorilla is a bundle of crude and intense emotions—such as rage, hatred, egotism, churlishness and depression. Its mind has no half tones. The emotions which prompt a smile, a handshake, or a tender embrace would be unthinkable. And yet the brute can hunger strike!

"What I'm afraid of," said Gran'pa, "is that—monkey-like—the others will start imitating, and that they'll all become passive resisters."

It was a terrible thought, and knowing what a powerful weapon the hunger-strike had been in the happy, pre-war days of the suffragette, we were naturally alarmed.

"I'm strongly of the opinion," continued Gran'pa, "that it's time we packed up what we *have* got—

and went. We shall never capture eighty-seven of the brutes."

I pointed out to him that, although no actual census had been taken of the anthropoid apes, a learned professor had once estimated their numbers as 200,000 chimpanzees, 200,000 gibbons, 50,000 orangs and 30,000 gorillas—the whole population being confined to the jungle lands of the equatorial zone, which was less than a fifteenth part of the earth's surface.

"You must admit," I added, "that twenty-two gorillas out of thirty thousand is rather a poor show."

"Thirty thousand!" he exlaimed, "I should put it at about thirty dozen, from what we've seen—or *haven't* seen—of them!"

"Anyway, eighty-seven into twenty-two won't go."

"If you knock off sixty-five, it will!" he retaliated.

"It's hard lines on the old chaps you're going to 'knock off.'"

"That's their business. We've done our best. If we caught the whole lot of the anthropoids in existence—and such a thing may happen any day if gland-grafting becomes popular—we should still find we hadn't enough to satisfy everyone. There wouldn't even be sufficient glands for the septuagenarians in England alone. I believe that there are about one thousand five hundred million human beings on the earth, George—an absolute glut of people—and possibly thirty millions of them are ripe for monkey glands. The demand for the latter, at any rate, will always be fifty times greater than the supply. In our case it will be only four times greater. That's logic, isn't it?"

"Yes," I admitted. "Cold, hard logic for men who have travelled seven thousand miles for—nothing."

"Nonsense! The voyage will have done them good.

So will the 'physical jerks' they're going through at present. *I* don't see what they'll have to complain about."

"You will when you try to explain matters."

Gran'pa was determined, however.

"You leave it to me!" he boasted.

"I've no intention of doing otherwise."

He contemplated me for awhile.

"So you think we ought to go on—and on—and on?" he said, at last.

"I certainly think that we should do what we can until the dry season is over."

Gran'pa thrust his hands into his trouser pockets and strode up and down the veranda of our bungalow. He was a man who always hated the idea of giving up a task to which he had once put his hand, and I knew that there was some unconfessed reason behind this sudden desire to leave Corisco.

I asked him what it was.

"It's simply the realization of defeat," he replied evasively.

"I don't believe it, Gran'pa. You're the last man on earth to realize such a thing—still less to admit it."

He said that he was pleased to hear me say so.

"Why not be frank?" I persisted.

"Well—it's like this, George....I'm worried over Sally. She is going back...."

"*What!*" I exclaimed. "Returning to England?"

"No! No! I mean....receding. All the good she's got out of the life over here is rapidly being undone. After all, she's an old woman, George—and I have the feeling that—we must be quick. At her age, strange things happen. Something slips—and suddenly

the wheels slow down. You must have noticed the difference in her during the last two or three weeks."

I had to admit that she certainly seemed very depressed and listless of late. At the same time, I thought that it was nothing to be alarmed about.

"I'm not alarmed!" said Gran'pa. "I'm merely taking precautions. It may be selfish of me to consider her before the rest of these old people—but it is natural, George!"

"Quite so! Then why not take her to Windhuk and let us follow later with as many gorillas as we can get by then?"

"It is not practicable."

"You and Sally could 'plane it, accompanied by the necessary lady gorilla."

"No! It is too late in the day to start doing things by instalments, like that. We must all go together. If you've any respect for my feelings, George, give in like a good fellow."

"Very well!" I sighed. "It's your expedition—not mine. And perhaps you're right...."

"You might admit it less grudgingly.... I don't want to seem a killjoy...."

"Killjoy!" I exclaimed. "You don't think that I'm fooling with these gorillas for the joy of the thing. The novelty wore off months ago. It's simply a matter of patience, followed by hard work if you're lucky, and a fit of depression if you aren't. What glamour is there in sitting in a cage, muffled up in a monkey skin, with your hand on the gas tap—waiting for some fool gorilla to stray by? It's as bad as being a spider. If only we could go in for a little genuine hunting....a few hippo,

or elephants....But no! We should scare away these precious apes. Pampered brutes!"

"You're very bitter, George!"

"Naturally I am when you suggest that I want to finish this job because I like it."

"Come now! Even you have your moments of gayety. There's always some new thrill in the jungle. That snake, for instance.... One isn't always sitting and waiting.... Still, the point is that you agree with me in the main. Capturing gorillas is a long and tedious business. We shall never get enough. Therefore, let us take what we have before any more of them die."

So at last, after many hardships and adventures, we came to the beginning of the end.

That same evening we called a board meeting, with Gran'pa, as managing director, in the chair. Dr. Croft was in favor of "closing down" immediately; so was Stringer. The only one who opposed Gran'pa (beside myself) was Obongi, our native interpreter. His reason was simple. He didn't want us to go because everyone on Corisco would miss us!

It is only fair to admit that Gran'pa had a very strong case. He pointed out that we should never overcome the initial difficulty caused by the unsociableness of the male gorilla, who sought food and shelter only in the company of a few wives and children. Unhandicapped, too, by any housing problems, the brute moved from spot to spot at will, and seemed seldom to visit the same place twice in succession. It also preferred the gloomiest, unhealthiest and most inaccessible parts of the jungle. Taking all these facts into consideration, had we not been extraordinarily lucky? What other body of men could have captured over twenty full grown gorillas in such a short time?

"Supposing," said Gran'pa, "that the news was flashed through to civilization at this moment. How many people do you think would believe it? I'm convinced that we've accomplished little short of a miracle. Let us be grateful, then, and not ruin everything by a spirit of overreaching greed."

I asked precisely what he intended doing.

"I shall explain matters fully," he replied, easily. "Then I shall suggest the drawing of lots. There will be white beans for the gorillas, and red beans for.... those who are compelled to end their lives naturally."

As if this were the solution of the simplest problem imaginable, Gran'pa rose to his feet and announced:

"We'll weigh anchor to-morrow, gentlemen! Meanwhile, I'll go and see Captain Morgan."

Thus did our sojourn in Corisco draw to its inevitable close, and when the dawn came we crept aboard "The Pilgrim Father" with sorrow in our hearts. Most of us wanted to go—and yet we didn't. Molly was particularly reluctant to leave.

"I do think it's a shame!" she said, tearfully.

"Must we go to-day, Charles?" pleaded Sally Rebecca.

"Alas!" murmured Gran'pa. "We must, my dear!.... Time is always on the wing. It waits for no one. And, here, our task is finished...."

I leant over the deck rail and gazed pensively at the white cliffs rising from the blue green sea. Corisco the Beautiful! The romance of the happy days which we had spent there awoke tender memories and we were filled with the sadness of parting farewells. Obongi broke down completely, as did many of the other negroes. Even the missionaries and their wives could not conceal their grief. Molly had been to them every-

thing that Gran'pa had prophesied—a ray of light in a dark world of ignorance and superstition; a link with "old times;" a glimpse of all they had left behind them in the countries of the civilized; a spirit of feminine youthfulness and abandon—such as is only understood and tolerated by the whites.

"When you come to England," said Molly to the Rev. William Watkins, "you'll bring Joey, *won't you?*"

Joey was her white-haired old "nigger man"—her particular pet—her swimming instructor—her body-guard—her right hand....

"Certainly, I will, if possible," he answered.

"Daddy will pay for his fare to London," she explained.

I hadn't the heart to protest against this new form of extravagance at such a moment. In fact, I almost suggested taking Joey with us there and then, and was greatly surprised that Molly had not thought of it herself!

"All ashore!" cried Captain Morgan, breezily.

The handshakings, the embraces and the kisses ceased; the gangway was drawn up; the engines throbbed; and the good ship swung slowly round and pointed its bow to the south. From the eastern horizon the sun suddenly shot its golden arrows of light. At the same moment our two aeroplanes rose from the centre of the island and came roaring overhead. All was commotion and noise. Below deck, we even heard the sharp bark of a male gorilla and the shrill cry of a female.

The 'planes sped swiftly out to sea, until they were mere specks; the land, with its cheering and gesticulating crowd of blacks, slipped slowly away; the native craft contracted into tiny toy boats—now peeping at us from the tops of white crests of foam, now hiding in the

trough of the waves. Gradually, we became a little, isolated community, afloat on the open sea. The terrors and hardships of the jungle and the queer, half-dream-like quality of the life we had led on Corisco resolved themselves into mere memories. Our mental outlook changed with the physical. We might almost have been aboard a steamer *en route* from England to France! Romance was dying; the glory of conquest was departing; adventure was dead. Henceforth, our task would be merely the commonplace one of spectators. Except for Sally Rebecca, we should now have to be content with watching others tread the paths of danger and excitement. And when that was finished—what then? Would life become ordinary and respectable and safe again, or would it open into vistas of still greater accomplishments?

"You look miserable, George!" said Gran'pa, breaking into my thoughts.

"I am! I'm loath to leave. It is as if Fate has written '*Finis*' and only blank pages are left in the Book of Life...."

"Nonsense! This is merely the 'Introduction.'"

"It's all very well for you," I complained. "You and Sally Rebecca are just beginning."

"Your time will come later!"

"The zest will have gone by then."

"Did it with me?"

"No! But you're different...."

"We're of the same flesh, George! You'll be just as keen when you're my age. Cheer up, old man!"

It was poor comfort to suggest that I ought to look forward to growing old in order that I might become young again, but it was typical of Gran'pa's strange outlook on life. He revelled in his aged youthfulness, and I

believe that he felt really sorry for merely young people.

"It's such an anticlimax," I complained. "Sneaking back with only a couple of dozen pairs of monkey glands after all our adventures and excitements."

"Don't you worry," he said. "There'll be plenty of excitement at Windhuk when I tell those old people. I wouldn't be surprised at a riot. You don't know how obstinate and querulous octogenarians are when they're in danger of being robbed of their rights. They hate sporting chances. We shall wish we were peacefully back amongst the gorillas yet."

Touching at Swakopmund, we despatched Sally Rebecca and Stringer by rail to Windhuk, a distance of about 240 miles. Molly, who insisted on going there by 'plane, remained on board.

When we reached Walfish Bay, "The Pilgrim Father" was anchored some distance out from the land to prevent any troublesome questions being asked by the port authorities.

It was our intention eventually to convey the glands by rowboat to the mainland and thence by aeroplane to Windhuk. Meanwhile, Gran'pa, Dr. Croft and I went ashore to make final arrangements with Oakley and Newland, who were awaiting us with their machines. The crew, anxious to get a glimpse of "civilization" again, followed in another boat. Thus it came about that Molly, Captain Morgan and the gorillas were left on board alone—one of those foolish arrangements which never reveal their importance until it is too late.

We were met by Oakley and Newland the moment we landed and at once inspected the "town"—a miserable looking collection of corrugated iron buildings, an uninviting hotel, and a few stores—all dumped down in a great expanse of bare, flat sand. A terrible example

of how not to develop one of the finest natural harbors on the East Coast of Africa.

Oppressed by the gloomy aspect of the place, Dr. Croft and I decided to return to the ship, leaving Gran'pa to come back later with the crew.

Anchored about half a mile out, "The Pilgrim Father" looked very picturesque and romantic, standing silhouetted against the faint yellowish-gray glow of the twilight sky.

As we approached, we heard sounds of music stealing over the quiet waters, "March of the Men of Harlech!"

"Captain Morgan's busy with his concertina," remarked Croft.

"Yes! He sounds a little erratic, though," I replied.

The music stopped and the gentle splash of the oars took its place. From the shore came the sound of a sudden burst of human cries in the still night air, and then the sharp yelp-yelp of a dog.

Then more music—quick and rollicking—of the "hi-tiddly-hi-ti!" variety. It lasted for about a minute and was immediately succeeded by a man's deep laugh.

Silence again. A star winked here and there, and presently a bright yellow light sprang out of the ship's side, casting a moon-like image on the water.

"How peaceful!" I thought.

Once more the concertina spoke to us—but with a different, steadier and surer voice than before.

"Ah! This is the *real* Captain Morgan!" I said to Croft. "But the other....I wouldn't be surprised if the old sinner hasn't been teaching Molly to play!"

We were now within about a hundred yards of the ship's side and I could see the silhouette of Molly's pretty little girlish head moving swiftly hither and thither as if

she were dancing. Snatches of song also came from her lips—half-remembered lines and phrases, little animal-like grunts of joy, weird hummings....

"Ho!....Ho!....That fas-cin-a-ting,
Ju-ust so glide,
It's a tum-tum tum-tum tum-tum....
Ju-ust so slide,
There's a rumor that the *Puma* do-oes it now,
Monkeys have taken to it....la-da-da-dah-dee
do it....!"

The deliciously cool sea air, the lapping of the water against our boat, a swaying lantern on "The Pilgrim Father," the hushed stillness of Nature, and the great gray shroud of mist creeping down on us from the horizon, all imparted to the scene a vague dream-like quality. Molly became a nymph, a will-o'-the-wisp, a sprite. Youth indeed! What nonsense this business of rejuvenation was compared with the care-free ecstasy of those who were young in soul! What a terrible mockery of the real joy of life were we instituting in that awful hospital for the aged at Windhuk!

As I watched her swiftly-moving and gyrating figure, I was filled with pity for myself and others—for all that vast multitude of humans who could never again recover the fine, free Spirit of Youth. In our blindness we might seek palliatives against pain, and foolish stimulants for jaded nerves and waning appetites and diminishing pleasures, but our greatest endeavors would always be in vain. One by one, we were creeping onwards and downwards. Here and there, a little rise on Life's roadway; here and there, a whiff of fresh keen air again; here and there a shaft of sunlight in a slowly

darkening world; but always that view of the straight pathway which leads down to a "ripe old age."

The Song of Youth, with its rippling, flute-like accompaniment, grew faster and faster until at last it suddenly stopped and I heard Molly cry out in a loud (and almost breathless) voice:

"Oh!....You are mean!....How can I keep up with that?"

The concertina slackened its speed into a mere drawl and then changed into a terrible discord of squeaks and grunts.

"I believe Molly's shaking the old chap!" whispered Croft.

We brought our boat to a standstill, anxious to remain an unseen audience for a little while longer.

"Do stop playing!" cried Molly.

"I have!" answered Taffy.

"I don't mean *that* playing—I mean being so silly! Do you know any Irish jigs?"

Evidently he did, for the next moment the concertina broke out into a wild, Celtic dance tune.

I saw Molly spin round with sheer delirious joy, extend her arms, throw back her head, and proceed to give an unauthorized version of an Irish dancer.

"Begorrah!" she cried; and "Och!" (apparently under the impression that all primitive people emitted weird noises when executing a national dance.)

Croft turned to say something to me, but before the words had time to leave his mouth a dull, muffled thud seemed to shake the whole ship. It was as if someone had struck a blow with a great hammer, away down in the deepest and darkest part of the hold.

The next moment the music ceased, and I saw a light in one of the port-holes flicker out into nothingness.

There followed the sharp, rending crash of breaking wood-work, a roar like distant thunder, a heavy plump on deck, and a deep-throated animal cry of triumph.

"My God!" I cried. "It's one of those gorillas! Row, man!....*Row!*"

We must have been some thirty to forty yards from the ship's side, but in the pandemonium which followed it seemed as inaccessible as if we had been that many miles away. Everything happened so quickly. Everything was so indeterminate and phantomlike in the dusk.

I heard Molly and Captain Morgan give a shout of dismay and terror and saw them turn their heads swiftly in the direction of the hatch. A second later they were running for their lives in the opposite direction.

"Jump!" I shouted at the top of my voice. "Molly! Jump!"

Whether the poor distracted child heard me I do not know, but she certainly took no heed. As she and the Captain disappeared round the other side of the ship there was a sudden and uncanny silence, broken presently by another blood-curdling roar from the gorilla.

I stood up in the rocking boat, shouted again, raised my revolver in the air, and fired into the starlit sky.

"Molly!" I cried, in anguish of soul.

She heard this time—thank God!—for there was an immediate answering long-drawn cry of: "Dad-dee!" from the bows. We rowed quickly in that direction and saw a huddled shape drop from the rigging and run along the deck like the shadow of a little old man. I fired, missed the brute, and heard a sudden scream of terror from Molly as it rushed on all fours towards her.

"*Jump!*" I bellowed.

Another cry from the bows, the sudden appearance of a slight, girlish figure on the deck rail, a splash, a

bump as our canoe struck the ship's side—and Molly was saved!

With my own hands, I hauled her in—surely the most precious burden that a man ever landed from the dark, mysterious sea.

"Daddy!" she wept, as she clung to me in her dripping clothes. "Oh! I am glad you were here!" And then, with a swift dismissal of all thought of her own plight: "Where's Captain Morgan?"

Without waiting for a reply, she raised her hands, cup-shaped, to her mouth.

"Captain Morgan!" she called.... "Here we are!"

No answer. But as we strained our ears for some sound of life on the dark and silent vessel which loomed above us, we heard a thud and the muffled curse of a man in difficulties. Then something hard and metallic struck the mast and fell to the deck with a crash.

Thrusting the canoe away from the ship's side, I shouted again:

"Jump, man!"

The words were no sooner out of my mouth than over he came, striking the water within a couple of yards of our boat.

We dragged him aboard, as though he were some huge, wet fish, thrown up unexpectedly from the deep; and then we held a council of war.

To have attempted to locate and shoot an enraged gorilla on board a vessel which was a hive of shelters and shadows would have been running risks that no one but a lunatic would have faced. Far simpler and safer to wait until morning. The gorilla is not an animal which will swim, even under the greatest provocation. Consequently, there was no fear of his taking his glands away with him in the dead of night.

"Do you think any of the others have escaped?" I asked Captain Morgan.

"Can't say! That fellow was most likely the one we had to put by himself because of his vile temper. If he is one of the twenty in the big cage, then the rest of them must be free—or soon will be!"

This seemed logical enough.

"It will be a pity if we have to kill the whole lot of the brutes," said Croft. "We could never capture them alive."

I agreed. Shooting gorillas is not sport; it seems too much like murdering one's fellow creatures—a form of enlightenment laudable only in human warfare. Quite apart from this, it was our intention to replace the gorilla's glands with live goat glands—an absurd, unfruitful operation to perform on a dead animal.

"Hadn't we better get ashore?" asked Captain Morgan rather abruptly. "I don't like hanging about in these wet clothes."

We commenced rowing again, but before we had gone a couple of dozen yards, I heard the sound of the other boat returning.

"That you, George?" came Gran'pa's voice out of the darkness.

Molly and I let up a joint shout of affirmation.

Unaware of what had happened, Gran'pa drew near to us and announced boisterously:

"Well, George—we've got our goats all right!"

"Yes!" I said, "and I've something else that'll get your goat. One of those confounded gorillas has escaped and is in possession of the ship."

"*What's that?*" he barked.

I repeated the information and gave him lurid details of Molly's and Captain Morgan's miraculous escape.

"If we'd stopped with you," I observed, " instead of returning when we did, God knows what would have happened. There's a streak of luck even in our worst misfortunes."

Seldom have I seen Gran'pa as excited as he was at that moment. He spluttered inarticulately, stood up in the boat, and nearly fell overboard.

"Hell!" he exploded. " What are we going to do if the brute starts running amok—and letting out the others? Anything may happen. There may be a free fight—murder—*anything!*... Those females, too..."

He broke off dramatically and I could see at once that his real fear was that the gorilla (and consequently the glands) chosen for Sally Rebecca might be damaged.

" We can't do anything to-night...." I began.

" Can't we?" he cried. " If you think I'm going to leave that hulking brute in charge of the ship you were never more mistaken in your life. Who'll come with me?"

Silence! Who, indeed, would board that vessel and face heaven knew what horrible peril?

" Listen to me, Gran'pa...."

" Very well!" he snapped. " I'll go myself! *I'm* not afraid!....Come alongside....That's right!"

In spite of our remonstrances and arguments, Gran'pa clambered into our boat, turned Captain Morgan and Molly out into the other one, and ordered the crew to take them ashore at once.

A couple of minutes later, Croft and Gran'pa and I were staring up at the dark hull of " The Pilgrim Father "—surely one of the most strangely manned vessels which ever rode the seas.

For all we knew to the contrary, its crew consisted solely of over twenty escaped gorillas—lying in wait,

watching, scheming. The first human being to board such a ship might be torn to pieces in an instant, and yet—

"Keep the damned boat still, George!" whispered Gran'pa, hoarsely. "I can see something...."

So could I. The vessel was filled with weird, fantastic shapes, every one of which might be a gorilla. Some of them seemed to move like stealthy ghosts in a phantom world; some were statuesque, corpselike; and all rose and fell with the gentle sway of the ocean. But there was not a sound anywhere, save the lap, lap of the water against the ship's side. From a solitary port-hole came the gleam of a light which only intensified the surrounding darkness, whilst on deck a lantern flickered and then went out.

It was the spectre-like quality of the scene which made it so gruesome and unnerving. One felt afraid not so much of gorillas as of —*Things*....

Only a man like Gran'pa—driven to desperation by an exaggerated sense of danger to something he valued—would have dared to face such unknown, terrifying perils. But he never hesitated for one moment.

Unable to locate anything at which we could fire with the certainty that it was a gorilla, Gran'pa insisted on our rowing round to the bows, where he removed his boots, swarmed up the anchor chain, and dropped silently aboard. Conscious of the intensely dramatic aspect of the situation, Croft and I backwatered our boat a dozen yards or so, and waited.

We saw Gran'pa creep along, in a crouching attitude, until he reached a dense, black shadow, where he suddenly vanished, as if he had dropped to his hands and knees. A second later something moved on the captain's bridge.

"See that?" I whispered to Croft. "It couldn't possibly be Gran'pa. Shall we fire?"

"No! There's a chance that it might be he—he's so quick! Shout, instead!"

"*Look on the bridge!*" we cried, as in one voice.

The words of warning had hardly left our lips when a little red spurt of flame leaped out of the darkness, a crash rent the still air and a shrill yell of pain told us immediately that the bullet had found its mark.

A medley of vague, half muffled sounds followed. We heard a heavy thud as the gorilla flung himself straight from the bridge to the deck; then the rush of padded feet; another thud; a groan, which might have been either human or simian—and, finally, a sudden, breathless silence.

I was horrified by the imaginative but vivid picture of Gran'pa lying helpless, with perhaps a broken limb or neck, and the wounded gorilla seeking some ghastly revenge.

"Gran'pa!" I shouted. "I'm coming aboard!"

"Stop where you are, you fool . . . .!" came the reply.

Pandemonium ensued. The gorilla roared; Gran'pa fired; and the whole deck seemed to be suddenly alive with bustle and noise. I was convinced that not one, but a dozen apes were loose. Cries, bumps, yells and roars ascended into the night air as if the lid had been taken off some hidden inferno of lost and tortured souls. Every gorilla on board, whether free or captive, must have been contributing to that chorus of rage and hatred.

At times, individual cries followed one another in quick succession, culminating in a unanimous roar that seemed to shake the vessel from stem to stern.

No man but Gran'pa could have lived and retained his sanity through such an ordeal; and yet never once

did he cry for help. Single-handed, he went aboard "The Pilgrim Father," and fought—and won.

"George!" he yelled, during the first lull.

"Yes?" I shouted back.

"It's all right, laddie! He's dead!"

He actually had the temerity to strike a match, and we then saw that he was bending down, looking at something.

"Aren't there any others loose?" I cried, in amazement.

"I don't think so!" he replied coolly. "I'll just go and see!"

Once more a deep silence had fallen on the vessel and, tense with anxiety, we waited while he went below.

"He simply doesn't know what fear is" said Croft.

"I don't think he ever did," I answered. "Certainly, not since he was rejuvenated."

"If those old men at Windhuk start complaining, it would be as well to mention this affair."

"Don't worry!" I observed. "Gran'pa will be the first to rub it in, if necessary. His accomplishments are many—and he never forgets the fact."

A minute or so later, Gran'pa was on deck again, serenely explaining that everyone below was quite comfortable and safe.

"A little excited, perhaps," he joked. "But that is only to be expected."

He was about to return to our boat when he suddenly thought of the dead gorilla.

"We'd better have this fellow's glands put into cold storage. A pity to waste them.... If you'll just wait a moment I'll light up and you can come aboard. It's quite safe now, George...."

I held my peace—mainly because I had no adequate

reply—but even when we did go aboard I could feel cold shivers running up and down my back.

"Did you *count* the gorillas below?" I asked.

"What a man you are!" laughed Gran'pa. "Yes! I read the roll call twice. There was a full attendance."

I could see that he was in a taunting mood, so I flattered him a little.

"You had nerve," I said, "to come on this deck in the dark."

He put his hand on my shoulder good-humoredly.

"George," he replied, "you never seem able to see both sides of the question. That gorilla had scores of hiding-places; but I had just as many, minus one—the one being the particular spot he was in at any given moment. He may have had the beef, too; but I had the brains—and a loaded revolver. I was sorry for that poor, misguided brute the second my socks touched the deck."

How simple everything always was when Gran'pa explained!

All I desired now was that he would be able to use the same species of disarming logic on the morrow, when eighty-seven eager old men began clamoring for their new glands.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ANCIENTS CAST LOTS

BY eight o'clock the following morning we had stored, in ice-packed vacuum flasks, twenty-two pairs of strong, active glands (eighteen culled from gentlemen and four from ladies). In return for their mainsprings of youth, so to speak, the gorillas had unfortunately to content themselves with goat glands, a much inferior article, but as Gran'pa so aptly said: "Half a life is better than none."

Leaving the poor brutes on board until we returned, by which time they would be convalescent, we set out, in a cool steady breeze, for Windhuk, a little over one hundred miles away and lying 5,000 feet above sea level.

Our 'planes flew evenly and swiftly over the narrow coastal sand belt, and then the great sand dunes, and finally the hilly country that gradually ascends towards the immense plateau of the interior.

Physically, the journey was uneventful and tame after our many jungle flights; but psychologically, it was one of the most romantic that could be imagined.

We were carrying Youth and Life, Happiness and Power—the veritable concentrated essence of being—monkey glands. Gods we were, moving through the high heavens for the benefit of the little humans who toiled and grew weary and old on the green lands beneath. Gods we were, soaring above the tempest and lightning of the mountain sides.

Even Bellerophon, aflight on his winged Pegasus, was no more godlike than we. For were we not going

forth to fight the terrible chimæra of Old Age—a much more formidable and elusive monster than the mythological creature which threatened Lycia.

Our foe dwelt not in one country, but in all the lands of the earth. It arose with the first dim speck of life, striving slowly and ruthlessly against Youth and the beauty of Youth. It stole the roses from the maiden's cheek, the lustre from her eye, the fleetness from her limbs, the gold from her hair, the grace from her movements, and the swiftness of thought from her brain.

It blunted the keen edge of appetite, robbed the flesh of its earthly pleasures, weakened the powers of resistance against disease, and painted the world a dull monotone of gray. Its victims clogged the wheels of industry and progress, hampered politics, handicapped art, fostered wars which were fought by others, and scoffed at romance. The Dragon, the Hydra and the Chimæra were merely harmless and playful little creatures compared with this insidious Monster of Old Age.

Little wonder that our hearts were light and gay as we thought of the subtle weapons of attack which we carried in those innocent-looking thermos flasks.

For over an hour we went hustling and humming through the blue heavens in pursuit of our prey; then we saw Windhuk, the City of the Aged, lying beneath us like a cluster of toy huts on a green and brown carpet.

The engines suddenly ceased their roar, the wind whistled through the struts, the tree-clad earth tilted and spun round in an ascending spiral, antlike inhabitants hurried hither and thither in curiosity and alarm, and down we dropped in an ecstasy of aerial exuberance.

Gran'pa was the first to alight. With a youthful spring, he leapt to the ground and ran over to the other 'plane to help out Molly. It was a lesson in politeness—

an art which few people are able to practice in moments of intense excitement.

I watched the scene with humility and shame, admitting to myself that I had been far too engrossed in my own speculations to think of others, and was about to compliment Gran'pa on his courtesy when my attention was suddenly diverted elsewhere.

A loud cry on our right had heralded the sudden appearance of between fifty and sixty strange looking men, clad in vests and "shorts." With their fists clenched on each side of their chests, they came quietly trotting round a cluster of trees at the one end of the open space to which we had just descended.

"What on earth is it?" Newland asked. "The finish of a cross-country race, or a deputation from the local mayor?"

"Heaven knows!" I answered. "They must be having some sort of sports here."

I was about to hazard another explanation for this astounding apparition when the truth burst upon me. I recognized first one and then another face in the crowd. That tall, thin man was Major Atkinson, and that stumpy little fellow was P. J. Cholmondeley, the world's oldest railway director.

"Why, they're the boys!" I exclaimed, hysterically.

"What boys?" queried Newland.

"The Club!...The Rejuvenation Club, man!..." I cried, gazing anxiously at Gran'pa, round whom they were clustering, like a pack of hungry hounds.

"Three cheers!" shouted a thin, reedy voice out of the half-clad mass of surging humanity.

"Hip-hip-hurrah!" came the unanimous reply.

"Hurrah!....Hurrah!...."

Their excitement was piteous to behold. Some of

the older and weaker of them were blubbering with joy. They jostled and pushed one another, laughed, shouted, jumped up on tiptoe, waved their arms, and coughed and spluttered with overexertion—behaving for all the world as if they had just been rescued from some such calamity as a shipwreck, or a six months' siege. In their wholesale endeavor to reach Gran'pa and shake his hand, they gravely endangered not only his toes but even his life.

"Gentlemen!" I heard him shout. "*Gentlemen!* ....Confound you!...."

In the momentary lull which followed, he managed to back his way to the aeroplane and climb into a seat. Standing there, he appealed for a hearing.

"Let him speak!" piped the same thin voice which had called for those lusty cheers.

The uproar died down into a murmur, and the murmur into a silence, broken here and there by the stray clearing of some aged throat, or the sharp, short cough of overexcitement.

"I appreciate your welcome!" said Gran'pa in restrained and even tones. "Look where you're going, sir; you'll smash the machine!" The crowd swayed and shouted. Then silence again. Gran'pa continued:

"I appreciate your welcome," he repeated, "and I understand your joy. Let me therefore proclaim at once that we have accomplished....much of what we promised. The glands...."

But he could proceed no further. The noise of the old people, eager and almost crazy for Youth, rose into another volley of hoarse cheers and cackling coughs and laughter. They had waited over ten months for this moment, and once they had heard the glad tidings further speech was regarded as useless. To them, the

word "glands" was sufficient. They had yet to learn that there were not nearly enough to go round. Ignorance was indeed bliss!

"Gentlemen!" shouted Gran'pa at the top of his voice. "Do behave yourselves! Remember that we are all tired out. We've been up half the night on your behalf. We want rest—even if it is only a few minutes' rest. If you will only have the goodness to disperse I will come to the sanatorium presently and tell you everything. I have news for you—good news—but not exactly what you expected.... Confound you, sir! Will you look where you are going!"

They saw that he was angry and, like the children that they were at heart, they obeyed his entreaty. With low murmurs and shakings of heads, they slowly withdrew from Gran'pa's hastily-chosen forum.

"That's better!" he cried. "Now, if you will only go home I'll promise to be round there in half-an-hour at the most."

So they retired once more, in gesticulating twos and threes—dampened and crestfallen, but still hopeful.

"Extraordinary!" I heard Gran'pa exclaim to Dr. Croft. "They look twenty years younger already. It's really astonishing what exercise, fresh air and diet alone will do on the road to rejuvenation. We couldn't have better material for our first experiment."

"There seemed to be about fifty," said Dr. Croft. "I wonder where the others are....Ah! here comes Dr. Martin! Now we shall know."

We welcomed the newcomer, who was head of the hospital staff in Windhuk, and presently discovered that the contingent of ancients which we had just encountered represented the pick of the Club. The partly rejuvenated graybeards had been doing their daily

"jerks" in the gymnasium when our 'planes were sighted, and they had sallied forth immediately. The remainder of the members were under treatment for such minor complaints as sore throats, sprains, broken bones, sciatica, and so on. The physician in charge also regretted to state that four of the members had expired since arriving in Windhuk. One had died from heart failure, another from pneumonia, another from apoplexy as a result of overexertion, and another had simply lost heart and pined away.

Gran'pa was clearly upset.

"What a pity!" he murmured, as we set out for the sanatorium. "What a pity! I had hoped to pull this thing through without any loss of life. How many do you consider able to undergo the operation to-day, Dr. Martin?"

"All except six or seven. That is, about eighty."

"More than enough!" grunted Gran'pa. "Take us over to the sanatorium, give us something to eat and drink, and then we'll explain matters. By that time my fiancée should have arrived by train from Swakopmund."

Dr. Martin said that he was glad to hear it, and also indicated that our sudden arrival was very welcome—though a little unexpected.

"What do you think of the old chaps?" he asked.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Gran'pa. "In fact, the glands seem superfluous...."

"Not quite," chuckled the doctor. "But very nearly...."

"What have you been up to, eh?"

"Well, first of all, we've given the old people plenty of physical jerks, embracing movements in every joint —fingers, elbow, neck—waist, knees, toes, ankles, spine

—and so on.... They've gone in for dancing, too. Jigs, reels, clog-dancing, hornpipes...."

"It all sounds very hot and perspiring!" observed Gran'pa.

"Did you think so when you saw them just now?"

"No! I can't say that I did. On the contrary, they looked astonishingly cool and fresh!"

Dr. Martin beamed with pride.

"They'd come straight from an hour's drill in the gymnasium," he remarked succinctly.

"You amaze me!" conceded Gran'pa. "Well, what else have you done? 'Jerks' alone wouldn't have produced such a—miracle."

"I suppose that you've heard of the latest theory, glandular stimulants?" asked Dr. Martin.

"Vaguely! Isn't it potashes, or something?"

"Yes, a colloidal, radioactive potash. It works with extraordinary rapidity and, what is most important, it seems to stimulate all the glands in equal proportion. I believe that coördination of effects is a vital necessity to any process of rejuvenation. That's why I am not particularly in favor of grafting only one type of gland, such as the thyroid. The result may not be lasting. You may easily develop one part of the organism at the expense of the rest."

This was touching Gran'pa on his tenderest spot, so to speak—his own glands (or rather Alfred's). I could see that he was annoyed.

"Such has not been the case with me," he said, airily.

"Not so far, perhaps," answered Dr. Martin.

"You mean to suggest that it may. I disagree with you entirely, sir! I feel that you are wrong. I *know* it!"

"Please don't look on this as a personal matter, Mr.

Hadley. It is merely a general observation. We know very little of the precise function of any gland at present, but we do know that the stimulation of one kind often leads to degeneration of another."

"Have you told all this to the old people?" inquired Gran'pa, after a pause.

"Naturally not!"

"That's a pity!"

"Why?" asked Dr. Martin.

"Because most of them will badly need some such comforting theory. I'm sorry to inform you, doctor, that we've not done nearly as well as we expected. Instead of the eighty-seven pairs of glands promised, we've managed to get only twenty-two."

Dr. Martin's expression was one of surprise and pain. In spite of his profession, he seemed to be deeply moved.

"This is very bad news!" he said. "They will be terribly upset."

"I am certain they will," agreed Gran'pa, almost cheerfully. "But they must make the best of it. Some of us will have to die of old age—sometime. It's not a new grievance. Men and women have been putting up with it for millions of years. Why, then, should these people complain?"

Dr. Martin shrugged his shoulders.

"You must remember that they have been here a long time and worked very hard at their exercises, solely in preparation for the new glands. Their enthusiasm has astounded all of us. When they find that only about a quarter of them are going to be rejuvenated, there will be trouble."

An idea struck me at this point.

"How would it be to distribute single glands, instead of pairs?" I suggested.

"No!" said Gran'pa, firmly. "I hate makeshifts. We must have one thing or the other—either youth or old age. We can't have men who don't know *what* they are. It would be as absurd as fitting a three-horse-power engine to a four-seater car...."

"I agree," murmured Dr. Martin, despondently. "The only thing is to explain matters—"

"And let them draw lots," added Gran'pa.

Dr. Croft joined in.

"There is no reason," he said, "why we should not tell them that this is merely the first consignment of glands—the remainder to follow later."

"No!" exclaimed Gran'pa. "Why should we lie to them? Within the next twenty-four hours this business is finished as far as I'm concerned. If the unrejuvenated like to go gland-hunting on their own, they're welcome to any information we can give them. That is an idea quite worth mentioning."

We had now reached the sanatorium, and adjourned the discussion until we had refreshed ourselves with food and drink. During the meal Sally Rebecca and Stringer arrived, looking rather hot and tired after their twenty-four-hour train journey. Their appetites, however, appeared to be much keener than usual, so they joined us immediately.

Feeling much brighter after our meal, we left Molly and Sally in charge of the matron and proceeded to the gymnasium, where Gran'pa was to deliver his eagerly-awaited speech.

Gran'pa, looking very spruce and cheerful, headed the procession, and as we filed in through the narrow doorway a low murmur of hope and joy rose from the

assembled multitude. The noise increased in volume until at last it broke into wave upon wave of cheers.

Under happier circumstances, it would have been a scene to make one's heart glow with pride. Seventy-nine of the Club's members were there in all stages of dress and undress—a fine, well-nourished, brown-skinned, clean-shaven, athletic-looking gathering of hale old men, with a total of well over 5,000 years to their credit! The contrast, when one compared this with the inaugural meeting at Battersea, was indeed startling. Gone was the bushy assortment of whiskers, the array of bent backs, the staccato accompaniment of coughings, the throaty undertone one usually associates with excited old men. Sun, fresh air, colloidal potashes, and plenty of physical jerks had already produced marvellous results. Would that we could have gone still further, and wrought a miracle by providing a sufficiency of the little glandular engines of complete youth....

One by one, we mounted the platform which had been erected for the occasion, bowed and then sat down.

So we faced one another, the Saviours, the Saved—and the Lost....

Gran'pa took from one of his pockets a handful of little red beans and, from another, a much smaller supply of white ones. He placed them in two separate heaps on the table in front of him and, from the way some of the old people behaved, I believe that they were under the impression that these objects were the actual glands! In any case, the uproar became more deafening than ever!

Standing up, and raising a hand for silence, Gran'pa began speaking in his clear, steady voice.

"Gentlemen," he said, with dramatic simplicity, "the hour is at hand."

I saw one old man in the audience blow his nose and

wipe away some tears which had gathered in his eyes. Another was trembling from head to foot with excitement. Still another seemed to be on the verge of fainting. The silence was intense. I heard a bean roll off the table and fall to the floor with a click. It was as if the proverbial pin had dropped.

Rapidly and cleverly and logically, Gran'pa got into his stride.

Opening with a short history of our campaign in the Gorilla Country, he referred to the tremendous difficulties we had to overcome, the hardships we had to endure, and the diseases we had to face. With a motion in my direction, he stated that malaria had nearly carried me off (which was the first I had known of it!) and that the daily dangers of the jungle had brought every one of us within an ace of death, not once but scores of times.

He described the gorilla in lurid and blood-curdling details, drawing a little on his imagination here and there. He spoke of the enormous strength of the fully grown male; of its cunning, its cruelty and its vindictiveness. Allusion was also made to the baby gorilla which had so playfully torn Gran'pa's trousers, and to the grandmother gorilla which had come to its assistance in the forest.

The narration of these incidents greatly amused the audience, but in the midst of their chuckles Gran'pa suddenly pulled them up by pointing out that, at the time, it was no laughing matter. Leaning forward, with clenched fists resting on the table, he said, in a low voice:—

"Dressing up as a lady gorilla and luring amorous or curious males to their doom may sound very humorous in this room to-day; but out there, in a country

where all animal life is engaged in a grim and earnest struggle for existence, Death—horrible and sudden—awaits the man who makes the least mistake."

Having been thus restored to a sense of reality, the old men were gradually given to understand that in the present backward state of science it was practically impossible to capture eighty odd live gorillas.

As Gran'pa approached nearer to the crux of the situation I could see that he was analyzing the psychology of his audience with all the cunning of a politician. He tactfully prepared the ground by stating that it would be a marvellous feat to obtain even half-a-dozen gorillas in the short time we had had at our disposal.

In this way he skilfully led the old people into the dark shadows of despair. Then he suddenly flung at them the magnificent announcement that we had caught not six, but twenty-two gorillas!

"Twenty-two!" he repeated, in a voice which simulated deep emotion. "It is an achievement of which I am justifiably proud!"

Even to me, it appeared a much larger number than it actually was. The effect on the audience was electrical. For more than a minute they cheered quite as vociferously as if we had already accomplished the miracle of rejuvenation in every one of them.

Gran'pa, too surprised at his success to continue his speech, sat down for a while. He glanced sideways at me, as much as to say: "Well! What do you think of that, George?" Stringer, with the maximum expression of Old-Billishness on his face, beamed paternally on everyone: Dr. Croft looked bright and cheerful; and Dr. Martin appeared to be slightly relieved—but by no means hopeful.

He must have understood the old people better than

any of us, for presently the uproar died down into an ominous and expectant silence.

Once again, Gran'pa was on his feet, talking quickly and persuasively.

He pointed out that even this magnificent total of twenty-two pairs of glands was unfortunately not enough for our purpose. The fact had worried him more than he could say. It had been the subject of numerous discussions. Amongst the many suggestions made, was the rather obvious one of supplementing the supply with glands obtained from the smaller monkeys. But he considered that this would have been a very unsatisfactory solution of the difficulty, and, in any case, it would be comparatively simple to obtain these at any time. Little monkeys were plentiful, widely distributed, and easy to catch. Incidentally, they were far more suitable for organ grinders than rejuvenation.

At this point Gran'pa picked up a handful of the red beans reposing on his right, ran them through his fingers, and said quietly:—

"The only fair way out of the difficulty, gentlemen, is for you to draw lots."

I saw one of the old men lose his bright red color and turn a muddy white. Possibly, he was always unlucky in functions of this nature. Another rubbed his hands together and chuckled gleefully—evidently convinced that good luck was one of his assets.

The general effect, however, was one of intense disappointment, followed by bitter resentment. They began to realize the unkindness of Fate in permitting the failure of an expedition which had started so promisingly. Also, they wanted a scapegoat—and Gran'pa was obviously the only one available.

Some hard words were flung at Gran'pa. He was

accused of negligence, of bad stewardship, and even of breach of contract—especially by those who had contributed to the expenses of the club.

It was really a most disgraceful exhibition of narrow-mindedness and gross unfairness. To hear these people, one would have thought that Gran'pa had acted selfishly from beginning to end, that he had never considered their interests, and that none of us had even endangered our lives. No labor leader, about to be deposed by a yelling horde of fellow-workers, was treated more scurvily than Gran'pa. It made my blood boil; and Stringer's moustache and eyebrows were bristling with suppressed indignation.

I was almost hoping that there would be a free fight. And I am sure that there was not a finger on our platform that wasn't itching to do mischief to some of those venerable necks and heads.

Serene and dignified, Gran'pa raised a hand for quiet. But the uproar increased. Was there ever a worse example of obstinate, greedy old age?

"Confound them!" I heard Gran'pa say.

Then he stood on the table and shouted at them as if they were dogs.

"*Be quiet!*" he yelled.

A sudden silence followed his words and, roused to fury at last, Gran'pa shouted out:—

"If there's another murmur I'll scrap the damned lot of those glands! What the devil do you mean by all this commotion? A nice lot of miserable cowards you are...."

He turned to his supporters on the platform and made a gesture in the direction of the audience.

"These are the men," he sneered, "who fattened on the late war—men who boasted of what they would have

done had they been thirty years younger! Look at their courage now! My God!...."

He said very little more in this strain, but what he did say was to the point. It shamed those seventy-nine resentful and spiteful old men into the most abject silence I have ever seen. They cringed and wilted before the tornado of his passion, until at last one of them stood up and apologized for himself and the rest of the company.

"That's quite all right!...." murmured Gran'pa, diffidently. "I think we all lost our heads for a moment. Please forgive me if I broke the bad news too suddenly."

How could they help cheering him after that?

More noise! Then quietness, as Gran'pa counted out the beans.

"With your permission, gentlemen," he said tactfully, "I am retaining the first white one for my fiancée."

(A voice: "Yes! Yes!"—followed by unanimous approval!)

"That," he continued, "leaves twenty-one.... Now for the red ones."

After a momentary and dramatic silence, Gran'pa said:—

"Fifty-eight! Would you mind checking the numbers, George?.... Oh! We want a hat!...."

A battered old thing was handed up by an octogenarian company promoter, and the proceedings began.

I would a thousand times rather have died from old age than face that terrible ordeal. It was gruesome, piteous, cruel. It seemed as if we were executioners taking part in some frightful Bolshevik rite. And yet it had to be....

One by one, they filed past the Altar of Youth and

Death, plunging shaking hands into that innocent-looking symbol of the future, fumbling therein for awhile, and then bringing forth—everything or nothing. A groan, a sigh, a sharp exclamation of despair, or satisfaction, or joy escaped each one of them as they went slowly by.

Some of those who drew the white beans of youth tried to conceal their good luck, as if afraid that their unfortunate brothers might think they were gloating. It was that spirit of consideration more than anything, which moved me almost to tears.

On the other hand, there was one man who branded himself for all time. I should imagine that he was a retired card-sharper.

His crime consisted of taking out three beans, quickly separating the white one from two reds, and dropping the later back in the hat.

"Put the other back!" rapped out Gran'pa. "You're disqualified, sir."

"It was an accident!" protested the old man. "They stuck to my fingers, and...."

"Put it back!" roared Gran'pa. "I'm here to see fair play and I'll get it!.... Oh, no, you don't. You've had your draw. We can't allow two goes....Move along, please!"

Flushed with shame, and still mumbling and protesting, he stepped back from the queue and the proceedings were resumed.

When they were finished, Gran'pa looked into the hat, uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and said:—

"Owing to the little lapse from propriety which you witnessed a moment ago, there is a bean left over, gentlemen. Those of you who have drawn the red will be agreeably surprised to hear that the remaining one is

white! I therefore suggest that the losers all place their red beans in the hat and try their luck again."

Everyone cheered (with the exception of the unfortunate individual who was the cause of this fresh lease of hope) and the supplementary draw opened amidst great enthusiasm and excitement.

When it was presently discovered that the first fifty-six (out of the fifty-eight losers) had all drawn reds, the tension became so great that the remaining two old men were compelled to sit down for a few moments. They were so exhausted with emotion that Dr. Martin was afraid they might collapse.

"Come along!" he said. "You *must* get this over at once!"

"Toss for it!" cried Gran'pa. "That is the fairest!"

So they tossed—and the man who called "Tails!" won.

"I....I always....say 'Heads!'" he half sobbed. "But this time...."

Then he fainted!

A bottle of smelling salts, however, and about a quarter of a bottle of brandy worked wonders, and the moment he regained consciousness the loser shook his hand and even congratulated him. More astonishing still, all the happy possessors of the white beans were the centre of an admiring and cheerful crowd of well-wishers, none of whom showed the least signs of jealousy or resentment.

"Bravo!" cried Gran'pa. "You're real sportsmen, gentlemen—every one of you! I withdraw the rash statement I made a few minutes ago, and ask your pardon."

He got it—in the form of more cheers.

We were beginning to congratulate ourselves on this happy and unexpected termination, when a little bald-headed man of eighty or ninety summers emitted a high-pitched wail of dismay.

"My bean!" he cried. "Somebody's stolen it!.... Stop thief!....*Ah-h!*"

He uttered the last syllable triumphantly, having grabbed the supposed miscreant by the coat collar.

There was a short scuffle, in which some half-dozen other old men took part and a yell of pain from the victim as someone bent back his clenched fist. Instead of a white bean, however, a red one fell from his open palm —a complete vindication of his innocence, which drove the loser of the bean to frenzy.

"I've been robbed!" he shouted hysterically. "It is shameful! Where is the blackguard?"

Naturally enough, no one answered his query. To add to the difficulty, nobody was certain exactly who were the winners and who were the losers before the theft had occurred.

"This is disgraceful!" said Gran'pa. "We must register the names of the winners at once, or there'll be still more pilfering."

"What about me?" yelled the victim of this daylight robbery. "The man who stole my bean will come forward as if he drew it."

"I don't see how we can possibly prevent it." observed Gran'pa.

"I insist on my name being included. Failing that, there must be another draw."

"*No!*" protested the whites.

"Yes!.... Another draw!" clamored the reds, completely losing their previous sense of chivalry.

"Absurd!" retaliated Gran'pa. "We can't have all

this business over again through the gross carelessness of one man. Will the holders of the white beans kindly give their names at once?"

They did—all together!

"One at a time, please!" ordered Gran'pa, taking out paper and pencil. "And we want to see your beans, as well!"

So, at last, after an arduous and exciting afternoon, we drew up a list of those who were entitled to the full fruits of rejuvenation.

The task was accomplished under great difficulties, owing to the noisy behavior of the the individual who had lost his bean. But Gran'pa was adamant. He refused to give way either to his pleadings or his threats.

"For which of these names do you suggest I should substitute yours?" he asked quietly.

It was a poser worthy of Solomon. It was unanswerable.

"Now," said Gran'pa, "I should be glad if the twenty-one winners would accompany Dr. Martin to his consulting room. It is essential that the operation should take place either this evening or to-morrow. The doctor will decide which of you are composed enough to undergo the treatment now. I need hardly say that the operation is a fairly simple one, but as it will involve the administration of an anæsthetic it is best to take elementary precautions. I wish you the best of luck, a speedy recovery—and complete youth, gentlemen."

They greeted his good wishes in the usual way, and then the gymnasium slowly began to empty itself.

One would have thought that no further problems could possibly be presented to Gran'pa for solution. But difficulties dogged our footsteps to the end.

The last man was on the point of leaving the room

when he suddenly drew back, closed the door on the retiring crowd and strode over to the platform.

"A few minutes ago," he explained briefly, "Colonel Wilkins offered me five thousand dollars for my interest in the glands. I've decided to close with him."

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Gran'pa. "We cannot permit the question of money to enter into a matter of this kind. You were all chosen irrespective of position, wealth or influence, and it would be establishing a vicious and dangerous precedent to allow any buying and selling of the glands. We should have the whole thing degenerate into a sort of auction sale in no time.... Don't you agree with me, George?"

"Most emphatically," I said. "It would be introducing terrible temptations to the poorer members of the club."

"Quite so! Youth—and life—are much too precious to be bartered for mere money. Suppose *we* had started selling the glands....Go to Dr. Martin at once, sir, and thank your lucky stars you have men of principle as your advisers and leaders."

When he had gone Gran'pa turned to me with a great sigh.

"George," he said, "for peace and quietness, give me the haunts of the wild gorilla every time. Another day or two of this would kill me. I must go and see Sally. I want comforting...."

CHAPTER XVII

SALLY SLIPS BACK

THE first person to recover from the operation and exhibit clear signs of rejuvenation was a red-faced little man, called Jonathan Abbott. In less than forty-eight hours after the new glands had been grafted, he not only played Gran'pa a game of chess, but actually beat him (in thirty-one moves). It was a great intellectual achievement which very much annoyed Gran'pa.

"Mate in three!....By jingo!" exclaimed Abbott, ecstatically. "This game takes me back forty years—to the time when I was on the county team!"

His boyish flippancy was a great comfort to the other patients, who naturally all anticipated the same marvellous results in their own particular cases.

To see the old people returning to their youth was like watching a brood of chickens hatch. One by one they crept out of the shells of their old age, fluttered their wings and began to manifest a keen desire for activity.

Intoxicated with youthful exuberance, Jonathan Abbott used to go outside the sanatorium and run about like a kitten after a fly, while those who were not yet capable of such exertions stood and encouraged him. They sang songs, laughed, gesticulated, stretched themselves, and emitted little, self-satisfied grunts.

In spite of the powerful properties of gorilla glands, I do not think that they alone accounted for these extraordinary scenes at Windhuk No single remedy for old age could have wrought such a change in so short a time.

I was inclined to agree with Dr. Martin that the previous administration of radioactive potashes and thyroid gland extract, the open air life, the physical exercises, and the peculiar, contagious atmosphere associated with crowds, all played very important parts. The resultant of these forces was so strong that the poor old brains and bodies were seething with superfluous energy.

This phase of exaggerated second childhood lasted for several weeks, until, under the counteracting influence of bromide draughts, it gradually subsided into a more restrained joy in life.

Meanwhile, Sally Rebecca, too, was recovering her youth. Not having been subjected to a preliminary treatment of intensive culture, she naturally made slower progress than the men.

Gradually, her features became less harsh in outline, her eyes brightened, new layers of fat were formed, her movements grew more graceful, her voice improved in depth and tone, and even her hair was darkening.

Now and then, a quaint girlishness exhibited itself, as if modestly peeping out on a new world. Keeping pace with the wonderful transformation of her body, the Spirit of Youth led her soul back to the past. She began treating Gran'pa and me as companions of her own age.

In contrast to the women of this generation, she showed a strange mixture of awakening motherliness and innocence and purity that belonged to the period in which she was born. And yet, behind it all was the wisdom of maturity, its tolerance, its deep understanding, its great gift of forgiveness.

Intensely curious, I asked Gran'pa:

"Is she as you knew her forty or fifty years ago?"

"Very nearly, George!" he answered, meditatively.

"It is a spiritual revelation. She has all the qualities she had in those days—only they are a little more subdued. That touch of abandonment is not there, but——"

"You can't expect everything the same," I pointed out.

"No....Of course not!"

He seemed to be somewhat lacking in enthusiasm, I thought, and I could not help saying:

"Surely you are not disappointed?"

"How can you suggest such a thing, George?"

But the impression remained. I was certain that something was amiss. Even Sally herself seemed to be less inclined towards Gran'pa than she had been before the operation.

A trifle resentfully, she told me that he was very domineering at times. She also felt that he spent far too much time with the other members of the club, and that she was consequently being neglected.

To make matters worse, Gran'pa became the moving spirit in a vicious little clique of gamblers who played poker and auction bridge with a wild desperation—as if determined to seek solace in cards, now that the glands had failed them. The stakes, too, were dangerously high.

"We must get him away from these wicked, unrejuvenated old men," I said to Sally one morning. "He's becoming demoralized."

The next morning Sally announced that she insisted on returning to England before the week was out.

"But, my dear...." protested Gran'pa. "You can't rush things like this."

Sally showed her spirit.

"Charles," she said, "If you and your numerous friends don't wish to come—you needn't. I can go alone."

"Don't talk nonsense, Sally! We can't have the party broken up in this absurd manner. It's idiotic for a mere woman to try and upset...."

"Steady, Gran'pa!" I whispered.

"Well, so it is," he growled.

Sally was pink with indignation.

"I won't be referred to as 'a mere woman'!" she snapped.

Seeing all the elements of a young lovers' quarrel in being, I withdrew and left Gran'pa and Sally to settle their differences alone.

Five minutes later Gran'pa strode past me with an air of grim determination. He was followed a few moments later by Sally, weeping.

"Don't cry!" I said, taking her arm and trying to soothe her. "Neither of you intend to be unkind to one another...."

"*I* do!" she exclaimed. "Oh! I could....*kill* him! (Sniff—sniff). Just fancy! He said that ...."

"Don't repeat it, Sally! It always makes it worse to go over things. Whatever he said, you know that he didn't really mean it."

She dabbed her eyes, stopped weeping, and then turned on me!

"Of course you stick up for him—being a man!" she cried.

I mumbled something implying humility, and she relented a little.

"Oh! He does make me lose my temper, George! ....I'm sorry I was horrid to you as well."

"I don't mind it a bit," I lied.

Sally suddenly began laughing.

"It's very foolish," she said. "We ought to know

better at our age....Anyway, I shall certainly return to England this week—if only you and Molly will back me up and come as well. *Please,* George!"

It was nice to think that someone relied on me. It was still nicer to think of home—comfort—and Nanny's efficient guardianship, after so much strife and worry. I was tired of Africa, its old men, and its monkeys.

So I gave Sally my promise of active support.

"I feel happier than I've been for weeks," she confessed, with a blush. "It's very good of you, George. If only your Gran'pa followed your example, he would have much better manners."

I wished he had been there to hear it. At the same time, I could not help wondering whether Sally had been a flirt in her younger days. Even now, she was certainly very promising in this respect. Or was she merely testing the powers of her new-found youth?

The same afternoon I told Gran'pa that I, too, was returning home with Sally.

"It's a conspiracy!" he barked. "You're a nice sort of great-grandson, George! What the devil....?"

"Come, now," I said, quietly. "Don't lose your temper. I'm fed up with this monkey-gland business and I want to get back to civilization. You can come later, if you prefer. What point is there in my remaining here any longer?"

"None....I don't even know why you came."

"That's merely spiteful! I caught three times as many monkeys as you...."

"They were not monkeys. They were gorillas—*apes!* Don't be so supercilious! Can't you find anything better to do than keep up this thin trickle of sneers at the old people?"

"Not if I stay here!" I replied. "They get on my nerves—with their chest smacking and all their other feeble imitations of youth."

"You wait until you're old!"

"I'd rather die first!"

Gran'pa glanced at me, spluttered, and then strode furiously away.

But I knew already that Sally was winning. Gran'pa's bark was always worse immediately before he —didn't bite....

The following morning he said:

"You're right, George! You always are, confound you! We're wasting time out here and the sooner we go home the better!"

Having unburdened himself thus, he went to the other extreme and couldn't complete our preparations for the departure quickly enough.

Excited at the prospect of returning to their friends, and possibly to fame, the rejuvenated also commenced hustling. But the unlucky ones—artificially fed on pot-ashes, and apparently incapable of sustained effort—became vindictive and irritable. They accused us of backsliding, breach of faith, and cowardice.

I don't know what rash promises Gran'pa had made during the last few weeks, but I had the suspicion that he must have given the old people some hope of rejuvenation in the near future.

On the morning of our departure he received three anonymous and threatening letters, which made him more determined than ever!

"I will not be intimidated!" he stormed. "I'm going home, even if it's my corpse that has to be taken

on board. They'd merely be killing the goose that lays the golden eggs. . . ."

" . . . .Or glands!" I observed.

" You have a dry wit, George!"

" Twelve months in this tropical heat would make anyone dry. It's worse than being in America."

Sally looked perturbed.

" You don't think they're serious, Charles, do you?" she asked, timorously.

" They haven't the guts!" he commented, vulgarly. " If they had, they'd go gorilla-hunting themselves. I've offered to place the whole of our machinery at their disposal. But no—they want waiting on hand and foot, like babies. When I think of the money and time I've wasted—Pah!. . . ."

There and then he called a meeting in the gymnasium, swore at the whole assembly, and ended by saying that they could either came back with us, or stay and moulder where they were.

Demoralized and shaken by the storm of Gran'pa's passion, they permitted themselves to be driven like sheep to the slaughter, and that afternoon we set out for England once again.

Gran'pa refused to allow any of us to return to " The Pilgrim Father " by 'plane. Full of feeble excuses about the lack of petrol, the disadvantages of carrying unnecessary cargo, and the waste of time, he told Oakley and Newland to fly their machines straight to Corisco, at which spot we were touching on the way home. As if deeply resentful of our presence, he went with them. So did Molly—to whom all things were still possible. The remainder of us proceeded to the coast by train.

It was a tedious and abominable journey, and when

we at last boarded "The Pilgrim Father," I am certain that there was not a man who wasn't thankful to shake the dust of Africa off his feet for ever.

Little Jonathan Abbott was hilarious with joy the instant we got on deck, and was so eager to view the convalescent gorillas that I shouldn't have been surprised to see him embrace them.

"Poor, dumb brutes!" he murmured, gazing through the bars of the great cage.

"Not so much of the dumb!" I warned him, as one of the huge males inflated its chest, preparatory to a deafening roar.

As I expected, the noise nearly scared the onlookers out of their lives. Until this moment none of them had guessed the fund of animal fury and power on which those innocent looking glands had thriven.

"Imagine meeting that fellow in the open," said Dr. Croft. "It could tear any one of you into shreds in half a minute."

A glance at their faces showed me that the old people did not doubt the statement. They were very quiet and timid looking. Fear of wild gorillas (and respect for their captors) had already produced a great change in their demeanor. They behaved as children who have been intimidated by weird stories of the "bogie-man." In the presence of such terrifying forces they became quite plastic and obedient—until the thrilling moment when two of the males flung themselves at the bars. Panic-stricken, the old men stampeded up to the deck.

"It's done them good," said Croft.

I cordially agreed with him, and prophesied a quiet, homely voyage back.

But I was mistaken. South of the Gaboon, we liberated the gorillas on a lonely shore which was backed

by dense woodland, and a few hours later the trouble broke out anew. The unrejuvenated began pestering us like a large family of greedy children.

Couldn't we all stay at Corisco awhile and capture a few more gorillas? Failing that, what about chimpanzees, or even the smaller monkeys?

"You'd better discuss the matter with my grandfather," I suggested.

"Can't *you* persuade him?" asked the ring-leader.

"I'll certainly do my best," I prevaricated. "But you know what he is...."

As we drew nearer to Corisco they grew more and more importunate, until at last Croft and I could stand the worry no longer. We developed sudden sickness and hid ourselves in our cabin.

Naturally, it was hard on Stringer. Being the only member of our party left on deck, he was nearly mobbed, but, with the aid of a little mental magnetism, and his great fund of good-natured patience, he pulled through. He made the suggestion—possibly a hypnotic one—that the old people should form a sub-committee, appoint a chairman, and draw up a definite scheme of action. They could ask Gran'pa to join them as leader on another gorilla hunt. If he refused the honor, they would then have to carry the thing through themselves.

All this Stringer afterwards told Croft and me as we sat in our sick chamber—where I had just lost twenty-five shillings at double dummy bridge.

"Have they done as you suggested?" asked Croft.

"Yes! Forty-nine of them have decided to stop at Corisco. The other nine are returning to England."

"Good!" I said. "Now we know where we are."

Never for one moment did I think that Gran'pa would stay and help those old people. It was grossly sel-

fish to ask a man who had already gone through so much for their sakes to give up his well earned rest, to face hardships and dangers again, and to postpone his marriage with the woman he loved. But old men are always selfish.

When we landed at Corisco, the chairman of the subcommittee immediately sought out Gran'pa, and took him away to some secret place of concourse.

No one knows what the chairman said or did, or what prevented Gran'pa's being his normal, dominating self. If ever the full story of those later days comes to be written this will still remain one of the unsolved riddles of his existence. He was always an impulsive man; but what followed that interiew was downright recklessness, folly, idiocy.

"George," he said, "I've decided to stay on here for another season's gorilla hunting."

"You're mad!" I exclaimed.

"All actions worth while appear stupid to the timid and cautious," he replied, smoothly and pompously.

"I won't quibble with you. All I want to know is why are you doing it? WHY?...."

"It's a kink in me, George. The glamour of Corisco —the joy of the chase—the dangers and excitements—the BIGNESS of it all, compared with the quiet, suburban respectability awaiting me in England or even America....I want to live—while I'm still alive. I want the candle to burn not only at both ends, but brilliantly. As Kipling has it, let me 'fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds' worth of distance run.' I must live. To vegetate would be to annihilate myself. I should—burst!....Let me die with my boots on, George!"

His eyes shone, his face glowed, his whole body was

vibrant with emotion. I was carried away in spite of myself. It took me several minutes to recover.

When I did, it was only to bow to the inevitable. Gran'pa's determination was like granite. Unmoved by the storm of entreaties hurled at him by Sally and me, he began making his plans at once.

Moreover, he drew to his aid other adventurous spirits. Stringer, Croft, Oakley and Newland all turned their backs on England. It was like an upheaval in a Government. Sally and I were deserted by even our best friends. We were dethroned. Our only consolation was that we were not quite alone.

With us, returned Molly and twenty-one rejuvenated old men, and—terrible anti-climax—nine cowardly octogenarians who were afraid to stay at Corisco and take their chance of again tasting the joys of new found youth.

It was a sad farewell. Molly looked more miserable than I had ever seen her. Sally was pale, red-eyed—but proudly defiant. Dr. Croft was quietly reproachful. Stringer was wistful and Old-Billish in the extreme. Gran'pa's expression was one of tragic majesty—a Napoleon giving up his Josephine—a martyr suffering for a great cause.

His nobility made me feel what a wretched worm I was. How happy I should have been to have stayed with them all in Corisco—the Beautiful! How I repented that rash promise which I had made to Sally!

As the anchor was weighed I went below, unable to take a farewell glance at the island. I was afraid of myself. A call from Gran'pa and I believe that I should have gone overboard and swum to the land. It was a moment when one must do everything—or nothing!

The engines throbbed and a distant cheer came from

the receding shore. So great was my agony that I actually groaned.

For over an hour I remained below struggling with my emotions, and it was not until we had lost sight of land that I began to recover.

Merciful night drew her curtain at last; one by one the old men crept yawning to their bunks. Dead tired, I, too, sought solace in sleep. But even this was denied me.

In the early hours of the morning a terrific storm arose and the ship rolled and lurched through the water like a drunken animal. To add to my misery, I was horribly sick.

Perhaps it was as well. It helped me to forget.

For nearly two days I cared little what had happened or what might happen. Then came a sudden calm and, with it, the sense of peaceful recovery after a great illness.

Slowly and shakily, we emerged on deck, where, chastened by sickness and grief, Sally, Molly and I sought comfort in one another's company. We even went so far as to avoid the other passengers; many of them reminded us so much of Gran'pa, and his cheerful boisterous way.

Gradually the wounds began to heal and we found ourselves looking forward to our arrival in England. Much would have happened during our absence abroad. Industrial unrest, high prices, the housing problem, overcrowded trains, bad plays, and poor books might have all vanished by now. In fact, we might find that the old country was really worth living in, after all....

After this enlivening anticipation, the days seemed to pass more rapidly than ever, and when "The Pilgrim Father" at last dropped anchor in Portsmouth Harbor I could hardly restrain my joy.

The scene which fate had so kindly set for our arrival home was magnificent. The docks were alive with activity, tugs were hooting, busy little boats were moving hither and thither over the calm surface of the water, a huge liner was stealing out to sea, and over all shone the warm and beneficent sun.

We bade farewell to those who were not journeying with us, left them aboard the ship, and caught the first train to town.

After the bleak and sandy shores of West Africa, the dense jungles, the swamps, the wide rivers, the huge strangely-tinted mountains, and that air of dark mystery and barbarism which enveloped the whole country of the gorilla, it was a wonderful contrast to gaze once again on the garden-like compactness of England, with its atmosphere of cultured peace and security.

Never was a train journey more soothing and swift and comfortable. It was a credit to any railway company.

In London, Sally and Molly and I said good-by to the rest of the party, after inviting a few of the pleasanter members of the club to pay us a visit at Richmond. Then we had dinner, listened awhile to some of the latest songs and music, and finally found ourselves in the crowded streets again.

It was theatre-time, and tired as we were, the temptation for amusement was great. But we resisted it and strolled part of the way home instead.

Sally, who had proved that she was a connoisseur in both food and wine, was in a meditative and affectionate mood. She took my arm, while Molly walked on ahead.

At Charing Cross, I heard a cry which sent the blood rushing to my head. I felt naked and almost ashamed. It was as if every eye in London was on me. Hastily and doubtfully, I bought an evening paper, drew Sally

and Molly aside, and sought out this latest and fleetest example of modern journalism.

It ran as follows:—

TWENTY-ONE OLD MEN MADE YOUNG

A STRANGE VOYAGE

MONKEY-GLAND QUEST

We have just received exclusive news of one of the most startling voyages of discovery ever made by man.

Over eighteen months ago there set sail from England between eighty and ninety old men in search of gorilla glands in Western Africa....

"We'll read it on the way back to Richmond," I said hurriedly. "This is treachery. In spite of their promises, one of the old men has given us away. Let's get a taxi before someone recognizes us."

Shall I ever forget that night?

We arrived home at ten o'clock, thrust our way through a little knot of enterprising journalists who had discovered my address, hammered at the door, and tumbled in on a half-prostrate Nanny.

"Go away!" I cried to the swarm of news-seekers, and I slammed the door in their faces, took off my hat and gripped Nanny by the hand.

She was dumfounded at the change in Sally, but as soon as she had recovered her faculties, commenced ministering to us and mothering us as of old.

Never was home more welcome to any man than it was to me that night. Nanny unearthed Molly's best silk pajamas, lent Sally one of her own nightdresses,

prepared our rooms, and even coaxed us to eat and drink. Then she sat and watched us, too full of joy to speak.

Bed, at last—cool and sweet and restful. Then sleep—and finally the morrow.

It was a day packed with excitement—not the least of which was getting rid of those importunate journalists, to whom I refused all information. I told them to go to—Corisco; gave them Gran'pa's address; and wished them a pleasant voyage.

Time sped by on wings. Weeks passed. Like a girl with a new frock, Sally displayed her youth to her friends—timidly at first, and then with a sort of reckless abandon. Her vivacity and enthusiasm made Gran'pa's initial exploits seem puerile and lukewarm. The illustrated papers clamored for her portrait and she even had several offers to go on the stage "for big money," as one man with a thick voice and a thicker waist put it.

But she kept her head throughout and never forgot the dignity of her position as a pioneer in real feminine rejuvenation. Finally, after one of the happiest months in my life, she decided to return to her flat in Maida Vale.

Giving her time to get straight, I called one afternoon.

"I'm so pleased to see you, George," she said; but she seemed to be a little depressed.

"You look worried," I replied.

"I'm....quite all right....really! It's just a headache...."

I knew that this was not wholly true.

"Won't you confide in me?" I asked.

"It's...." she hesitated.

Then she said suddenly:

"I'm hurt, George, and yet—in some ways, I'm relieved. . . ."

"What is it, Sally?"

"Your grandfather has written asking me to release him from our engagement!"

"Impossible!. . . What's the reason?" I stammered.

"He says that he doesn't think we're suited to one another. And he wants to be free." She paused, and added, rather quaintly: "He seems to think that there aren't enough adventures in England."

"The old fool!" I exclaimed.

"You mustn't say that!"

"Of course you'll release him. He isn't worthy of you."

"I owe everything to him, George," she said in a low voice.

"Didn't Croft and Stringer—and I, help?"

She looked at me tenderly and gravely.

"Can I ever forget it? You've all been—splendid!"

For awhile neither of us spoke.

Then I said again.

"Give him his wretched freedom, Sally!"

"I. . . . have!"

"When?"

"Yesterday."

Another silence.

"Do you regret it?" I asked.

"No-o! He was too impulsive—too eager—and reckless. And so very youthful. . . . I should never have been really happy with him." She hesitated; and then, with a little shrug of her shoulders, she astonished me by adding:

"I can't delude myself any longer, George. I'm an old woman—*really* old!"

What could I say? I looked at her more closely and, although she was sitting with her back to the light, I saw that she was indeed speaking the sorrowful truth. Even during the few weeks which had elapsed since her leaving Richmond, she had aged considerably. Little wrinkles were creeping back to their natural strongholds round the eyes and mouth. Her hair was losing its lustre; her voice its depth; her neck its roundness. When I had first entered the room I had been so surprised and disgusted at the news of Gran'pa's latest folly that I had not noticed the change in Sally. But now it was pathetically evident.

Youth was going—going—almost gone....

"You're just tired and depressed," I said, at last, trying to lie, even to myself. "It will soon pass off, and then...."

"No, George!....It will get gradually worse—until I'm old again, and....back where I started...."

"But....Gran'pa?" I stammered. "*He's* still young!"

"He's an exception," she answered, with astonishing calmness. "I felt it all along. That is why I hesitated so at the very first. It's not the glands which have made such a difference to him, but his faith—the sort of wonderful faith that moves mountains, George. He's been like that all his life—an American, through and through. Everything he put his hand to—and believed in—he accomplished. I'm sure that anything is possible if only one has real faith...."

"I haven't got it!" she added, wistfully. "I've always been shrinking back from things—afraid of anything new. Perhaps that it why I never married.... When your grandfather came, after all those years, still full of fire....I was carried away. I tried, oh, so hard,

to believe in him, and in myself. But I've found that it is too late to alter my disposition. I haven't the faith. I'm still shrinking—doubtful—timid. . . ."

It was a pitiful confession.

Outside, the evening was drawing in, and gray, shroud-like shadows stole into the room. I did not like leaving her.

"Come back to Richmond with me," I suggested. "Molly will soon pull you round. You're brooding here."

"No!" she said. "I'm not unhappy. It's just the . . . . sudden change. In a short time I shall be my old self again. Don't think me ungrateful, George, but the last twelve months have not been *natural.* I don't seem to have had a moment's rest. All the bustle and hurry have unnerved me. I feel more contented, now that it is over and done with. . . ."

She must have seen that I doubted her last statement, for she placed a hand on my arm and said:

"Young people can never understand that it's no hardship to be old—if one is still well. It all happens so gradually. Nature is kind. It is only her children who make life so difficult!"

Her philosophy astounded me. It even converted me. I felt that Sally's view was right, and Gran'pa's wrong. The one was art; the other vandalism. Why had we tried to patch up and renovate Nature's old masterpieces? Not because we sought artistic improvement but merely because we were eager to show our own cleverness. Gran'pa's whole attitude was: "Look what I've done!" Unfortunately, I, too, had adopted the pose, and Sally's youthfulness had temporarily captivated me solely because it was the living proof of a marvellous achievement (by us.)

Sally rejuvenated was impossible, absurd. But Sally as a gracious, white-haired old lady was lovable—a work of art, hallowed and moulded and softened by the hand of Time. To tamper with such a masterpiece was sacrilegious, profane.

Thus did this sudden relapse present itself to me, and I eventually returned home feeling much as a man must feel when he has become converted to a new religion. I saw old age not as a tragedy or curse, but as a sort of blissful and holy peace. It was the quiet pleasure of relaxation after effort, accomplishment after strife.

And yet I could not dispel my curiosity as to the condition of the others who had been rejuvenated. Were they also slipping back to old age? Or had some of them that wonderful, Gran'pa-like faith which was capable of moving mountains—and finding thereunder the springs of perpetual youth?

Unable to resist the temptation, I telephoned through to one of the club's members—a bucolic-looking retired colonel who had greatly annoyed me on the voyage home by his frequent assertions of physical well-being.

"Well?" I inquired. "How are things?"

"Fine.... *Fine!*" he barked, as if on parade.

I heard him smite himself on the chest, or make some queer noise which sounded very like it. Then there was a peculiar metallic click followed by the confused sound of distant voices and an uncanny silence as I was suddenly cut off.

I got through again, however, and heard the terrible news that the poor old fellow had dropped dead!

Shaken and scared by such a disaster, I was far too afraid to make inquiries of any of the other old people that night.

Was it an omen? Was it the beginning of the end—or, at any rate, of the slow march back to a natural and respectable old age?

To the eternal shame of modern science in general, and of our expedition in particular, I regret to say that it was.

Old age did not creep stealthily upon them, as Nature normally arranged; it overtook them by leaps and bounds. Wrinkles appeared on the old people almost as swiftly as the rash of a disease. They went to bed at night and woke up next morning a year, or even two years older. In spite of their youthful posings and their ejaculations of: "Great!" "Never felt better!" "Fine!" they began doddering once more. After all the excitement and promise of the last twelve months, they had merely returned to England, home, and —bath-chairs.

It would be hypocritical of me to say that it was pathetic, for, logically considered, it was but the fulfilment of the law of all life—the wisely ordained destiny of man, and animal, and even vegetable. In time, I myself would bow to this great and inflexible law—as unflinchingly and calmly as my ancestors. Why, then, should I feel sorry for these people?

I wrote to Gran'pa and told him that one of the old men had died, and that the remainder had practically returned to the point whence they had started. I requested him to come home, lest evil befell him out there in the wilds. I drew a picture of Sally—happy and gracious and beautiful again—and of the many comforts and joys of civilization, compared with the hardships and dangers of gorilla hunting in the Dark Continent.

But he refused to be cajoled.

"Not a day older since you left," he wrote, in the same jerky way as he talked. "Not even a minute!.... What Sally says about faith is perhaps right. I don't know—and I don't care. I'm still youthful, whatever the cause....Caught ten more gorillas up to date; but afraid the old boys here may lose heart and refuse to be grafted if the bad news percolates through to them. I rely on your keeping silent....Don't kill yourself with worry. Your 'old' Gran'pa is still going strong; so you've no need for sleepless nights, laddie!.... England's too slow for me. The first twelve months there put ten years on my age. Except for the glands I'm positive that another twelve months would have killed me. Can you wonder at my being in no violent hurry to return?...." And so on.

That is Gran'pa's point of view—at present.

This is mine. I am young (in the true sense of the word). I can afford to be patient. The dug-out in the garden has been filled in again. Gran'pa's clothes have been carefully brushed and put away—with a good supply of "moth balls."

But his arm-chair is still by the fireside—waiting. He cannot resist its call—and mine—forever. Time is on our side.

Time will win.

THE END

1.G.339.
The gland stealers, by Bertram 1922
Countway Library BFN9070
3 2044 046 314 118

1.G.339.
The gland stealers, by Bertram 1922
Countway Library
BFN9070
3 2044 046 314 118